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Western Mining in the Twentieth Century Series

THE KNOXVILLE MINING DISTRICT, THE McLAUGHLIN GOLD MINE,
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Volume VI

Robert McKenzie	McKENZIES IN MONTICELLO, BERRYESSA VALLEY
Harold Moskowite	NAPA COUNTY SUPERVISOR
Marion Onstad	NEIGHBOR AND EMPLOYEE OF THE McLAUGHLIN MINE, 1980-1995
Ronald Parker	RESIDENT MANAGER OF THE McLAUGHLIN MINE, 1988-1994
Richard Stoehr	HOMESTAKE ENGINEER AND GEOLOGIST TO SENIOR VICE- PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR
Joseph Strapko	EXPLORATION GEOLOGIST, McLAUGHLIN MINE DISCOVERY, 1978

With an Introduction by
Duane A. Smith

Interviews conducted by
Eleanor Swent
in 1994, 1995, and 1996

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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Robert McKenzie (b. 1920), Napa historian, journalist: recollections of Knoxville District mines, Berryessa Valley early days, flooding by dam. Harold Moskowitz (b. 1926), rancher, Napa County supervisor 1976-88: discusses granting of permits to mine, anti-growth sentiment. Marion Onstad (b. 1938), rancher, Homestake employee 1981-98: Morgan Valley before mining; changes brought by paved road, electricity, telephone; organizing workshops for clerical employees. Ronald Parker (b. 1950), plant engineer to manager, McLaughlin Mine, 1986-94: work as plant engineer, Delco-Moraine, 1972-76; engineer to superintendent, 1976-86, AMAX, MO, lead mine/smelter, environmental, health issues, violent 1984 labor strike; McLaughlin startup problems, staff reorganization to maximize operations and maintenance. Richard Stoehr (b. 1927), Homestake engineer to senior vice president, 1954-84: discusses operating uranium mines, UT, NM, 1954-61; Homestake's marketing, exploration; discovery, development of McLaughlin Mine, researching autoclave process, authorization by directors; world economic view of gold. Joseph Strapko (b. 1951), Homestake geologist, 1975-81: memories of reconnaissance for "mercury hot springs project", presenting Manhattan-McLaughlin project to Homestake board, locating first successful drill hole, disagreement with subsequent drilling program.

Introduction by Duane Smith, Professor of History and Southwest Studies, Ft. Lewis College, Durango, CO.

Interviews conducted by Eleanor Swent in 1994, 1995, and 1996 for the Western Mining in the Twentieth Century Oral History Series. Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

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Northern California, Volume VI

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INTRODUCTION TO KNOXVILLE/McLAUGHLIN PROJECT by Duane A. Smith

Imagine, if you would, what it would be like to have a series of interviews from people of all walks of life from a nineteenth century mining town and district--for example, a Fiddletown, California; a Silver City, Idaho; or a Caribou, Colorado. Would it not be exciting to "hear" first hand the stories of miners, store owners, lawyers, teachers, and a variety of other folks that make up the mining West?

Such a series of interviews would be the perfect answer to the Roman statesman, orator, and philosopher, Marcus Tullius Cicero, who observed more than 2,000 years ago: "History is the witness that testifies to the passing of time; it illuminates reality, vitalizes memory, provides guidance in daily life, and brings us tidings of antiquity." Imagine, then, what the Knoxville/McLaughlin oral history project is going to mean to future generations.

The Knoxville, California, mining district has a long mining history. It started in the 1860s with mercury mining and continued into the 1990s with Homestake Mining Company's McLaughlin gold mine. Under the guidance of Eleanor Swent, and as part of the Regional Oral History Office's Western Mining in the Twentieth Century series, a comprehensive oral history project of this mining district was launched in 1993. These fascinating and significant volumes are the finished projects.

While obviously impossible to go back beyond the turn of the century, interviews were conducted with miners, ranchers, journalists, teachers, and merchants who were in the district before the arrival of Homestake. The words of these people provide an exciting look at a district in transition and decline. Then came Homestake and their world changed.

Some gold mines had been operated here in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but they were nothing like what occurred when a major mining company became interested. Homestake's geologists found enough gold to warrant development. The concept would be an open pit mine and mill that would impact Napa, Lake, and Yolo Counties in northern California for a generation and provide for the future.

Five and one-half years went into planning for the McLaughlin gold mine, including 327 approvals needed for the mine's development. Not only were some mining ideas new and ground breaking, but the operation was sitting in one of the most environmentally aware states in the country. Homestake spent over \$283 million in start-up costs, before mining commenced in March 1985. The first year's production of 83,836 ounces of gold showed that the planning and work had been worthwhile from a dollars-and-cents aspect. Homestake was proud of its operation.

"The McLaughlin mine is the site of the first successful commercial application of the autoclave processing technology for extracting gold from ores. The operation began production in 1985 and is a showcase for environmental responsibility."

Homestake would continue to mine the pit into 1996 when mining ceased, except for processing previously stockpiled lower-grade ore to be worked for approximately another eight years, "using a conventional direct cyanide leach process." Reclamation, which has been conducted simultaneously with mining, would also continue into the next century. As Homestake's annual report in 1995 stated, "Reclamation of mine waste dumps is scheduled for completion in the latter part of 1996 with the final placement of top soil and hydroseeding. The planting of oak trees and other indigenous vegetation will continue seasonally until the area is completely reclaimed."

All this makes the oral history project that much more exciting; it was conducted while the district still operated and memories were fresh and riveted on a host of topics and concerns. This multi-volume series covers almost every conceivable aspect and impact--it is a monument to a refreshing, innovative way of approaching mining history.

These volumes provide a case study of twentieth century mining, environmental issues, and regional concerns, the successes, failures, tensions, and developments that go to make up a 1980s and 1990s mining operation and the people involved from all walks of life. They are a gold mine of primary documentation and personal memories of an era that is passing into history. A perusal of the table of contents will give the reader an idea, but the interviews need to be "assayed" carefully to grasp the whole story of what went on at the McLaughlin mine and why its impact was so significant. This is a "high grade" effort all the way.

Cicero would be proud. These volumes do illuminate reality, vitalize memory, and provide guidance in daily life. Without question, they testify to the passing of time and will eventually bring "us the tidings of antiquity."

Duane A. Smith
Professor of History and
Southwest Studies

September 1997
Fort Lewis College
Durango, Colorado

PROJECT HISTORY--Knoxville District/McLaughlin Mine Oral History Project

The development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Knoxville District of Napa, Lake, and Yolo Counties in California in the last quarter of the twentieth century was a historically significant event. The mines of the district had been major producers of mercury since 1861. In 1888 an official report by G. F. Becker on the quicksilver deposits mentioned the presence of free gold which could be obtained by panning. It took almost a century before this knowledge could be acted upon when Homestake Mining Company signed an agreement with James William Wilder, owner of the Manhattan Mine, in 1978.

Advisors to the oral history series on Western Mining in the Twentieth Century¹ who were also Homestake directors, Professor Douglas Fuerstenau, principal faculty advisor, Clifford Heimbucher, and John Kiely, all urged the Knoxville/McLaughlin oral history project, as did advisor Sylvia McLaughlin, widow of the Homestake chairman for whom the mine was named. It was decided it should be a community oral history, in contrast to the previous volumes in the series which documented individual careers.

The five historically important aspects are: the history of the Knoxville mercury mining district, with its periodic booms and busts; the effects of a large industrial development and influx of technically trained workers in an economically depressed rural area; the efforts to obtain permits to develop a mine near a center of environmental activism; the continuous pressure oxidation system which was pioneered at the McLaughlin processing plant; the reclamation of the mine site. The life of the McLaughlin mine was projected to be about twenty years, and most of the key players were available for interviews. It is a nearly unique opportunity to document the discovery, development, and closing down of a mine while it is happening.

The history of the Knoxville District begins in 1861 with the incorporation of the Redington quicksilver mine, also known as the XLCR or Knoxville mine, then employing as many as 300 men. The town of Knoxville had thirty or more buildings, including a store, hotel, postoffice, Wells Fargo office, school, and cemetery. In 1872 the state legislature transferred prosperous Knoxville Township from Lake County to Napa County, although it is separated from the Napa Valley by mountain escarpments. Lake County was compensated with a one-time payment of \$3500.

¹ Information on the Western Mining in the Twentieth Century oral history series appears in the Appendix, page 334.

In 1869 Richard Knox and Joseph Osborne opened the Manhattan Mine on the same lode as the Redington. The Oat Hill or Napa Consolidated Mine was opened in 1872. A report on the metallurgy of quicksilver issued by the Department of the Interior in 1925 says, "In 1874, the Knox continuous shaft-furnace for the treatment of both fine and coarse ores was first used in California." [Bulletin 222, p. 5] The Knox-Osborne design was further augmented by a fine-ore natural-draft furnace developed by mine superintendent Charles Livermore. The district prospered until 1905, for a decade around World War I, and from 1927-1936. Demand for mercury rose during wartime because it was used as a detonator for explosives.

Knoxville was linked by road through Sulphur Canyon with the town of Monticello in fertile Berryessa Valley. Farmers descended from early Scots settlers grew pears, prunes, wheat, and barley and occasionally worked in the mercury mines. After World War II, when California's population was growing rapidly, a dam was built which by 1956 flooded the valley to create Lake Berryessa. It attracted vacationers, and for most of them it was the end of the line. The unpaved road from Lake Berryessa to Knoxville was impassable when rains filled the creek bed. In the other direction, from Knoxville to Clearlake, there was a similar little-used road through Morgan Valley.

Although it is only a few miles from the densely populated San Francisco Bay Area, in 1978 Knoxville township had few telephones, surfaced roads, or bridges. Populated by ranchers, miners, seasonal hunters, and outlaws, it was one of the most economically depressed regions in California, with high unemployment. In 1991, Napa historian Robert McKenzie called it "truly the last frontier of Napa County."

The chronology of the McLaughlin Mine is as follows: in 1961, following publication of a Professional Paper by USGS geologist Ralph J. Roberts, Newmont geologists John S. Livermore and J. Alan Coope found a major deposit of micron-sized gold on the Carlin trend in Nevada. It was economic to mine because of technological advances in explosives and earth-moving equipment, and development of new methods such as heap-leaching for recovery of gold from ore. This led other mining companies to search for similar deposits of "invisible" gold.

In 1969, the National Environmental Protection Act was passed, followed in 1970 by the California Environmental Quality Act.

In the 1970s, "Bill" Wilder, principal of the One Shot Mining Company, was reclaiming batteries for Mallory Company in the furnaces at the Manhattan mercury mine. Environmental concerns had made mercury mining unprofitable, so Wilder was crushing the beautiful colored rock on his property and selling it as decorative stone. An assay from several years before had showed gold was there, but at that time mercury at \$75 a flask was more valuable than gold at \$35 an ounce, the official

price from January 1934, when the United States went off the gold standard, until 15 March 1968.

In August 1971, President Richard Nixon terminated the convertibility of the dollar into gold, and the price climbed to \$800 an ounce in 1980. In 1977, Homestake Mining Company underwent a restructuring and embarked on a program to find a world-class gold mine. Their search revealed geology reports in their files from the 1920s which encouraged exploration at hot springs near the Knoxville mercury mining district of northern California. In 1978 Donald Gustafson, Homestake geologist, visited the Manhattan Mine at the place where Napa, Yolo, and Lake Counties meet. A drilling program revealed an epithermal gold deposit which at this juncture remains unique; no extension or replica has been found in the Great Valley geologic sequence or the Coast Range thrust which were exposed at McLaughlin.

Mining companies are familiar with developing mines in remote and rugged locations, with the attendant logistical problems. In this case, there was the further challenge of obtaining permits to develop a mine in the jurisdiction of three counties, regional and state water quality districts, three regional air quality districts, various state agencies, and the Bureau of Land Management. It took more than five years and cost millions of dollars to secure the 327 required permits which made a stack of paper more than eight feet high. In addition, the ore itself was finely disseminated, fairly low grade, and as it turned out, highly refractory. Traditional methods of beneficiation were ruled out by environmental concerns, so Homestake metallurgists developed a high pressure oxidation system, incorporating technology from South Africa, Germany, Canada, and Finland, which has now been widely copied.

The eventual design was for a mine pit with adjacent crushing plant and a five-mile pipeline to conduct slurry to a zero-discharge processing plant using a variety of technologies, including autoclaves. Reclamation in the mine and on dumps began almost immediately, and at the end of the mine's life, it will be a part of the Nature Reserve system of the University of California, for research by scholars at both the Berkeley and Davis campuses.

In 1991, the Regional Oral History Office began to explore possibilities for funding the Knoxville/McLaughlin oral history. A four-year project was outlined to include about thirty-five interviews averaging three hours each, for a total cost of \$100,000, resulting in a set of volumes covering the mercury mining, the gold mining, and the resulting changes in the surrounding community. The Hearst Foundation granted \$20,000 to document the gold mine, and the Mining and Metallurgical Society of America gave \$6,000 to document the earlier mercury mining. Homestake and Chemical Lime Company each donated \$2,000, which enabled interviewing to begin in March, 1993.

The best laid plans, however, can be changed by circumstances beyond control. One of the first names on the list of interviewees was John Ransone, Homestake's construction project director. He sent helpful background documents in preparation for a scheduled interview; however, before it could be held he died of lung cancer. The project manager for the construction company, Klaus Thiel, in the meantime had been assigned to work in Brisbane, Australia, so he could not be interviewed. Several of the other Homestake people had scattered: James Anderson to Denver, Jack Thompson and John Turney to British Columbia, David Crouch to Salt Lake City, Donald Gustafson to jobs in Namibia and Kazakhstan, Joseph Strapko to Maine. William Humphrey and Richard Stoehr both underwent major surgery. Nevertheless, interviews were conducted with these and others involved in the development and operation of the mine.

Although similar difficulties occurred on the list of community leaders, by 1996 interviews had been conducted with a county supervisor from each of the three counties involved, Napa County planners, the Lake County school superintendent, community historians and pioneers, merchants, and ranchers. Some of the most vocal opponents of the mine were also interviewed.

There is a perception that the former mercury miners are all dead, killed by mercury poisoning. In fact, Dean Enderlin, a geologist at the McLaughlin Mine and also a Napa County native and historian, helped to locate some who were remarkably healthy, and who were interviewed. Elmer Enderlin in his eighties spends summers working at his tungsten prospect in Idaho and winters in Lower Lake. Anthony Cerar, also in his eighties, at the time of interviewing still actively maintained several historic mercury mines, including La Joya and Corona. William Kritikos, operator of the Oat Hill Mine, was nearly seventy-three when he died following a stroke, but was in good health at the time of his interview. Ed McGinnis, who worked around the Reed Mine as a boy, is still active in his seventies. Bill Wilder, who owned the Manhattan Mine, is a relative youngster in his seventies and in good health in Upper Lake.

The project comprises forty-four interviews in all. Three of the interviews were completed as separate volumes: William A. Humphrey, Mining Operations and Engineering Executive for Anaconda, Newmont, Homestake, 1950-1995, Patrick Purtell, Maintenance and Management at the McLaughlin Mine, 1985 to 1997, and James William Wilder, Owner of One Shot Mining Company and Manhattan Mercury Mine, 1965-1981. They are bound individually. Subsequent oral histories in the project will be bound into volumes containing more than one interview, arranged in alphabetical order. Supplementary documents are included as appropriate; Volume I contains general information. It is expected that researchers will refer to the entire set for a comprehensive account of the McLaughlin Mine.

We are grateful to all of the interviewees for their participation. There are many others who have helped also. Homestake Mining Company has supported the project not only with funds, but also in lending the Regional Oral History Office a computer and printer, and making available for research the archival video tapes and files of newspaper clippings and news releases, as well as the environmental studies, the environmental impact report, and the environmental impact statement. Early on, a day tour of the property and box lunch were provided for a van load of ROHO staff, interested students, and faculty from the University of California at Berkeley. The conference room at the mine and the San Francisco offices at 650 California Street have been used for interviewing.

James Jensen made available his extensive files on mercury mining and processing and mercury poisoning. Anthony Cerar led a vigorous hike around the Knoxville mine site, identifying foundations of long-gone buildings and workings. John Livermore conducted a tour by jeep of the Knoxville district, and suggested the importance of the Morgan North papers at The Bancroft Library. Staff members gave help at the Napa Register, the Napa Museum, the Sharpsteen Museum in Calistoga, and the Lake County Museums in Lower Lake and Lakeport. Professor Duane Smith, mining historian at Ft. Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, wrote an introduction for the Knoxville/McLaughlin Mine oral history project. Professor Greg Wheeler of Sacramento State University has given valuable advice, and staff members of the California Division of Mines and Geology Les Youngs, Ron Churchill, and Kathleen Twomey have provided photos and graphs. Dean Enderlin provided valuable supplementary documents. Mrs. George F. Clark provided photographs taken by her husband in 1983-1985.

The tapes of all the interviews are available for study at The Bancroft Library. The completed volumes will be available at The Bancroft Library and in the Special Collections at UCLA.

Eleanor Swent, Project Director
Knoxville District/McLaughlin Mine
Oral History Project

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Knoxville District/McLaughlin Mine Oral History Project

William Humphrey, *Mining Operations and Engineering Executive for Anaconda, Newmont, Homestake, 1950 to 1995, 1996*

Patrick Purtell, *Maintenance and Management at the McLaughlin Mine, 1985 to 1997, 1999*

William Wilder, *Owner of One Shot Mining Company: Manhattan Mercury Mine, 1965-1981, 1996*

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume I, 1998

Anderson, James, "Homestake Vice President-Exploration"

Baker, Will, "Citizen Activist, Yolo County"

Birdsey, Norman, "Metallurgical Technician, McLaughlin Process Plant"

Bledsoe, Brice, "Director, Solano Irrigation District"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume II, 1998

Cerar, Anthony, "Mercury Miner, 1935-1995"

Ceteras, John, "Organic Farmer, Yolo County"

Conger, Harry, "President, Chairman, and CEO, Homestake Mining Company, 1977 to 1994"

Corley, John Jay, "Chairman, Napa County Planning Commission, 1981 to 1985"

Cornelison, William, "Superintendent of Schools, Lake County" (Includes an interview with John A. Drummond, Lake County Schools Attorney)

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume III, 1998

Crouch, David, "Homestake Corporate Manager-Environmental Affairs"

Enderlin, Elmer, "Miner in Fifty-Eight Mines"

Fuller, Claire, "Fuller's Superette Market, Lower Lake"

Goldstein, Dennis, "Homestake Corporate Lawyer"

Guinivere, Rex, "Homestake Vice President-Engineering"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume IV, 1998

Gustafson, Donald, "Homestake Exploration Geologist, 1975-1990"

Hanchett, Bonny Jean, "Owner and Editor, Clearlake Observer, 1955-1986"

Hickey, James, "Director of Conservation, Development, and Planning for Napa County, 1970 to 1990"

Jago, Irene, "The Jagos of Jago Bay, Clear Lake"

Jonas, James, "Lake County Fuel Distributor"

Koontz, Dolora, "Environmental Engineer, McLaughlin Mine, 1988-1995"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume V, 1998

Kritikos, William, "Operator, Oat Hill Mine"
Landman, John, "Rancher, Morgan Valley"
Lyons, Roberta, "Journalist and Environmentalist"
Madsen, Roger, "Homestake Mechanical Engineer"
Magoon, Beverly, "Merchant and Craft Instructor, Lower Lake"
McGinnis, Edward, "Worker at the Reed Mine"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume VI, 1999

McKenzie, Robert, "McKenzies in Monticello, Berryessa Valley"
Moskowite, Harold, "Napa County Supervisor"
Onstad, Marion, "Neighbor and Employee of the McLaughlin Mine, 1980-1994"
Parker, Ronald, "Resident Manager of the McLaughlin Mine, 1988-1994"
Stoehr, Richard, "Homestake Engineer and Geologist to Senior Vice President and Director"
Strapko, Joseph, "Exploration Geologist, McLaughlin Mine Discovery, 1978"

Knoxville/McLaughlin Interviews in Process:

Ingle, Hugh, Jr., "Mining Engineer, 1948-1998"
Krauss, Raymond, "Environmental Manager, McLaughlin Mine"
Thompson, Jack, "General Manager, McLaughlin Mine, 1981-1988"
Thompson, Twyla, "County Supervisor, Yolo County"
Tindell, Avery, "Capay Valley Environmentalist"
Turney, John, "McLaughlin Metallurgist: Pioneering Autoclaving for Gold"
Underwood, Della, "Knoxville Rancher, McLaughlin Mine Surveyor"
Wilcox, Walter, "County Supervisor, Lake County"

Regional Oral History Office
The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California

Western Mining in the Twentieth Century Series
Knoxville/McLaughlin Project

Robert McKenzie

McKENZIES IN MONTICELLO, BERRYESSA VALLEY

An Interview Conducted by
Eleanor Swent
in 1994

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Robert E. McKenzie dated November 4, 1994. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Regional Oral History Office, 486 Library, University of California, Berkeley 94720, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user. The legal agreement with Robert E. McKenzie requires that he be notified of the request and allowed thirty days in which to respond.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Robert McKenzie, "McKenzies in Monticello, Berryessa Valley," an oral history conducted in 1994 by Eleanor Swent in *The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume VI*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1999.

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Robert McKenzie, circa 1985.

Photo by Gwenn McKenzie.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Robert McKenzie

Robert McKenzie, photographer and columnist for the Napa Register for many years, was the repository of historical lore and legend of Napa County, and I regularly called on him to supply or confirm information about the local history. His grandparents, the McKenzies and the McDonalds, came to the Berryessa Valley from Nova Scotia in the 1870s. The general store of Cook, McKenzie and Sons in Monticello served as post office, telephone exchange, and social center, as well as supplier for the mercury mines in the Knoxville District. Bob McKenzie's father was a partner in the Manhattan Mine at one time, but as Bob recalls, it was an ill-fated investment.

Through him, I became even more aware of the human tragedy of the drowning of the Monticello Valley to create Lake Berryessa. At his suggestion, I visited the Vacaville Museum to see the photographs taken at Monticello by Dorothea Lange and Pirkle Jones which resulted in their book, Death of the Valley. In his interview, he recalls meeting Lange and following her good advice about composing photographs: "Just because people manufacture paper eight by ten doesn't mean you have to make your composition to fit that....be true to your own vision." After retiring as a journalist, McKenzie busied himself as a photographer and publicist for some of the new Carneros District vineyards.

The interview was conducted on 4 November 1994 in Napa at the McKenzie home, which displays many examples of Bob's beautiful photographic work. It was a pleasure to interview him, and it was a sad loss when he died following a heart attack.

The tapes of the interview were transcribed in the Regional Oral History Office and the lightly edited transcript was sent to Robert McKenzie for review in June 1997. Unfortunately, he died on June 27 before he could complete the review, but his wife Gwen kindly returned the transcript with a few suggested corrections of dates. The manuscript was corrected and indexed at our office. The tapes are deposited in The Bancroft Library and are available for study.

The Robert McKenzie interview is one of more than forty interviews which were conducted by the Regional Oral History Office from 1993-1999 in order to document the development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Knoxville District of Lake, Napa, and Yolo Counties, California, from 1978-1998, as part of the ongoing oral history series devoted to Western Mining in the Twentieth Century. The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. The office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Eleanor Swent, Project Director, Research Interviewer/Editor
Regional Oral History Office

March 1999
The Bancroft Library, Berkeley, California

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Robert Everett McKenzie

Date of birth July 24, 1920 Birthplace San Francisco, CA

Father's full name Albert Alexander McKenzie

Occupation Merchant Birthplace Monticello, CA

Mother's full name Ethel Frances (MacDonald) McKenzie

Occupation Homemaker Birthplace Rio Vista, CA

Your spouse Gwenn Groth McKenzie

Occupation Office Manager Birthplace Milwaukee, WI

Your children Karen Ina (McKenzie) Mueller

Where did you grow up? Monticello, Berryessa Valley, Napa County, CA

Present community Napa, CA

Education Sacramento City College, BA-San Jose State College.

Lifetime teaching credential (secondary school) in Art & Photography

Occupation(s) Retired; formerly Press Photographer for Napa Register;

taught Photojournalism at Napa Valley College; wrote local history column for Napa Register

Areas of expertise Photography; Photojournalism; Napa County History

Other interests or activities Genealogy; Art & Art History; widely-read in Civil War history & Pacific Northwest;

Organizations in which you are active Napa County Historical Society

**Wednesday
July 2, 1997**

The Napa Valley Register

Obituaries

Robert McKenzie

NAPA — Robert Everett McKenzie passed away June 27.

A native of San Francisco, born July 24, 1920, Mr. McKenzie moved to Monticello as an infant and spent his early life there. Mr. McKenzie received a B.A. from San Jose State University.

From Aug. 15, 1942, to Dec. 19, 1945, he served in the 378th Anti-aircraft Artillery Battalion in Iceland as a staff sergeant with the U.S. Army.

Mr. McKenzie was a press photographer for the Napa Valley Register for 37 years and also taught photojournalism at Napa Valley College for about 20

years.

Survivors include his wife, Gwenn Groth McKenzie of Napa; daughter and son-in-law, Karen and Bob Mueller of Napa; brother and sister-in-law, A.A. (Sandy) and Janice McKenzie of Napa; sister, Rosemarie Michael of Greenbrae; aunt, Mildred Atkins of Alturas; uncle, John McDonald of Los Gatos; and five grandchildren, Kerry, Lissa, Erin, Julius and Samantha; numerous cousins, nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents, Ethel and A.A. "Bruz" McKenzie.

Private family graveside services will be held. Private interment will be at Monticello Cemetery, Spanish Flat. Arrangements are under the direction of Richard Pierce Funeral Service.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Napa County Historical Society, 1219 First St., Napa, 94558; Queen of the Valley Hospital Foundation, P.O. Box 2069, Napa, 94558; or a charity of the donor's choice.

INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT MCKENZIE

I MCKENZIES IN MONTICELLO, BERRYESSA VALLEY

[Interview 1: November 4, 1994] ##¹From Nova Scotia in the 1870s: Carriage Builders and Wheelwrights

Swent: Robert McKenzie is interviewing in Napa, California, on November 4, 1994.

Let's have you tell us about your family background and how they came to Monticello.

McKenzie: Both my grandfathers, McKenzie and MacDonald, came from Nova Scotia out to California probably in the late 1860s, early 1870s. McKenzie came from Four Mile Brook, Pictou County, Nova Scotia; and MacDonald came from Antigonish, Nova Scotia.

Swent: Is MacDonald M-A-C?

McKenzie: Yes. I think this would probably be a good time, in the event you aren't already familiar with the difference between M-C and M-A-C. There is none. There is no difference. On the tombstone of my great-great-great-grandfather back in Pictou in Nova Scotia, it is spelled--well, first of all, my great-grandfather's name was spelled Murdoch McKenzie. He was M-U-R-D-O-C-H--M-C-K-E-N-Z-I-E. On an early census, official census back there, it was spelled M-U-R-D-O-C-K--M-A-C-K-E-N-Z-I-E and it was interchangeable--interchangeable, depending on the person doing the writing. There's no such thing as Scot or Irish or Irish or Scot. Has nothing to do with it. Although almost all the Highland Scots go back into the 900s and the 1000s, along up until 1200, 1300, most of them came from

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. a guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Ireland originally, so as far back as I can go--as far back as I've read about.

Anyway, these two gentlemen came out here. My grandfather [W.D. McKenzie] followed an older brother, who must have come in 1868 or '69; '69, I think. And why or how he happened to go directly to Monticello in Berryessa Valley that early, I can't find out.

Swent: You had a conjecture, though, didn't you?

McKenzie: Well, I had conjecture. First of all, the two Berryessa brothers and their wives got that grant. I'm not sure even who gave them the grant, whether it was Vallejo or Pico or whoever was governor at the time that they got it. They gambled a goodly portion of that away--so the story goes, at least--and a fellow by the name of Schwartz, and I don't know his first name, had the whole thing.

Then three fellows--today you'd call them real estate speculators, I guess--in essence, that's what they were--a fellow by the name of Hamilton, one Bostwick, and one John Lawley got the most of it. Lawley had a big ranch up there. And this is the part that I can't find out but must have happened somehow. We know that Great-uncle Alex went from Nova Scotia to Boston, and he did that two or three times. He was a blacksmith and a carriage builder by trade. We're not quite sure what he was doing there except probably he met a girl that later, here in Napa County, he married. I don't know how he got her out here, but I haven't had the wherewithal to do the traveling back and forth to Boston and so forth, go into records. It didn't seem that all important to me.

At any event, we think he met Lawley back in Boston. We think Lawley had some mining interests out here, probably quicksilver and he went to Boston to buy machinery, and rather than shepherd that out himself, he met and hired Great-uncle Alex to come with that machinery around the Horn in a ship, up to San Francisco. We think that's how Alex got here. That's because Lawley owned part of Berryessa. It was natural that when they put the machinery on buckboards and teams of mules to get it over the mountain and into Berryessa Valley--there wasn't much of a road then. In fact, probably they took it up the Sacramento River and got it off somewhere in the neighborhood of Fairfield, came across Fairfield up through Green Valley and over the hump into Wooden Valley and over into Berryessa Valley.

In any event, he ended up out there, and here in Napa he married the girl; that we know--we assume that he met her in Boston because we know that she was in Boston about the same time we surmise he was.

Swent: What was her name?

McKenzie: She was Nancy King Fraser, and she traced her ancestors back to the Hector. To Canadians, and especially Highland Scots in Nova Scotia, the Hector is the equivalent of our Mayflower. So her forebears--her grandfather, in fact--was on the Hector when that came over.

And they ended up in Berryessa, having nine children. I think all except one lived.

Swent: It's amazing.

McKenzie: Remarkable for that day and age. Now, Alex got into the blacksmith business, and then sooner or later he called for his brother, George, to come out.

Swent: And that was your grandfather.

McKenzie: No, George was my great-uncle.

Swent: Oh, another great-uncle!

McKenzie: And he was a carriage builder, wheelwright, and one of these who put the fancy decorations on. And he learned that trade in Boston. He came out, and he worked as a blacksmith and a carriage builder until he hurt his arm, crippled his arm. And he went back--either went back or sent back--for another brother, the baby of the family, William David McKenzie, and that was grandfather, my grandfather.

Grandfather William David McKenzie of Cook & McKenzie

McKenzie: When George smashed up his arm, he had been made a justice of the peace in Berryessa for that little area, an appointive job back in those days. Got a taste of politics. He bought a branch store. There was a store here in Napa, and I don't know if it was Thompson or Thompson-Beard. They had a little ranch up in Monticello. And he bought that. Went into the mercantile business. He decided to run for sheriff of Napa

County, George did, so that's when he called for his youngest brother, W.D., William David.

So granddad came out. Came down to Napa. Went to the old Napa Business College for a while. Went back to Berryessa and went into the mercantile business.

Swent: About when was this?

McKenzie: Well, let's see. It must have been in the 1880s. A traveling man by the name of William Coleman Cook, a traveling salesman (I don't think they called themselves traveling men)--who incidentally was another Nova Scotian; his home was Halifax in Nova Scotia--and granddad got together as partners in this mercantile business. Now it's Cook and McKenzie. And Cook married a McKenzie girl. He married one of Alex's daughters.

My granddad married Rosamund Little. They had my Uncle Mac. My dad was the second in line, Albert Alexander McKenzie, Sr. And Claude Dingwall McKenzie. And my Aunt Mim, who is the only one of the group still alive. She's eighty, I guess. She lives up in Alturas, Modoc County. We go up to see her every so often.

Father, Albert Alexander McKenzie, Sr.

McKenzie: So my dad had gotten out of grammar school. We think he clerked for some store around--I've been trying and trying to find out where. My grandfather wanted to send him to Heald's Business College.

Swent: In Berkeley?

McKenzie: In San Francisco. And decided he was too young. He had just graduated from grammar school, so he put him out to work for a few years, then he went to Heald's. Now what was the year of the Exposition in San Francisco? Was it near the earthquake time?

Swent: It was 1915. It was after the earthquake because the theme for it was the rebuilding of San Francisco.

McKenzie: All right. Then he went down there anyway. Went to Heald's, my dad did. And he was there during that Exposition. Then he went home and became a third partner. That was the "son" of Cook, McKenzie & Son.

And he got married in 1916 or '17. And my mother was a MacDonald. And her father was a blacksmith. A blacksmith in those days was different from a farrier today. The training that they got when they were apprenticed somewhere in their youth made them experts in the handling of iron. They could do anything with iron, make anything out of iron. They were artists. I've seen some of the work. I mean, you know, they just didn't bang things together [chuckles] in iron. They really were quite good at it. Grandfather MacDonald was here in Napa, working for a fellow by the name, I think, of Getz, Frank Getz. And my dad met--yes, then my dad met her. I don't know how they met; I'm not quite sure. But they got married on my mother's seventeenth birthday and I joined the group in 1920.

Swent: Were you the first child?

McKenzie: Yes, I'm the oldest. My brother came three and a half years later. My sister came ten years later. One of the things that happened back in those days was that when you lived in an outlying district, if you had any relations at all, preferably ladies that lived in the cities where there were hospitals and where there were doctors, you would go there a month or two before, and you would stay for a month afterwards. It wasn't like they do today: go to the hospital, have the baby, four hours later get up and go home the next morning, you know. It was sometimes weeks and weeks and months and months. Anyhow, I'm a native of San Francisco.

Swent: Oh, she went to San Francisco.

McKenzie: Her sister lived in San Francisco, her older sister.

Swent: Your parents lived, though, in what you call Berryessa.

McKenzie: Yes, in Monticello, Berryessa.

Swent: That must have been quite a long trip into San Francisco.

McKenzie: Well, once they got over the hill here, I know my dad had a big old four-cylinder Hupmobile, I think. It's about twenty-six, twenty-seven miles by the road, as it was then, from Monticello to Napa. Took about an hour, an hour and ten minutes, maybe; an hour and fifteen minutes. It was a twisty, narrow, gravel, corduroy, rutted road. It was a difficult trip. Once you got here, however, you took the train down to the Oakland Mole and the ferry across.

Swent: How did the train get across the Straits?

McKenzie: I've been wondering about that, too, but I think they doubled back, up to Martinez, where the railroad bridge was, and on the regular S.P. tracks. At that stage, it was probably Southern Pacific. There was a Napa Valley-Vallejo Railroad, too. They may have had to take that to Vallejo and transfer, or they may have--because I can recall once when dad took myself and my mother and probably had my brother--he must have been an infant because I wasn't far removed from that. He drove us from here to Vallejo, and we got on a ferry at Vallejo and went to San Francisco, and that was a rough, wild trip. So he had his car when he got to San Francisco.

Cook, McKenzie & Son: General Store, Post Office, Telephone Exchange

Swent: Your father as the storekeeper must have been one of the most prominent people in town.

McKenzie: Well, yes, my granddad was the postmaster. And when he gave up the job, my dad took it. My dad had it for years and years and years.

Swent: Was the post office in the store?

McKenzie: The post office--we were one of the first in the state to have a telephone system, and the Monticello telephone exchange was right there in the store. The post office was in the store. We sold everything. You name it, we sold it: farm equipment, farm machinery, tires and tubes by the scads, groceries--almost all the groceries. Other people would come in and try it, and pretty sooner or later, Dad and Granddad would buy them out. People got used to coming to us because--I would guess [chuckles] because the post office was there. Was a magnet as well.

Labor Intensive Farming in the Berryessa Valley

McKenzie: Don't forget, there wasn't all that many people up there. There wasn't. I imagine at its best, prior to the introduction of so-called labor-saving machinery to harvest with, when they had teams of sixteen and twenty mules, team after team after team drawing gangplows or harvest equipment and so forth, it took men to handle all that. There had to be men to turn the

horses and turn the mules, make sure they were watered and fed and curried and taken care of, and the care that livestock normally requires. But I don't imagine that there was ever more than four hundred or four hundred and fifty people in the Valley at any one time.

Swent: Were there seasonal workers who came in?

McKenzie: Rarely. Now, Granddad and Uncle Mac and my dad and Will Cook had about, roughly, 200 acres of Bartlett pears on a ranch about a mile north on the banks of Putah Creek. It ran right through us. And my Uncle Mac sort of ran the ranch. And there were seasonal workers, but not Mexican or Latinos; they were whites at first. Now, they traveled the whole state, all the way up through Washington. Probably ended up at Wenatchee, Washington, picking apples. But they picked everything from peas to tomatoes to you name it. Came through. We got our fair share of labor who picked the pears and some of the prunes. Lots of prunes up there, too, at that time. Berryessa Valley was also known as Napa County's bread basket. Well, that was simply because we were probably the biggest single acreage of wheat in the county. In any event, it was a small, peaceful (relatively) place.

Civil War Veterans and Mayflower Descendants

Swent: Mostly Scots?

McKenzie: Well, not really. We had a fair share of Civil War veterans hit that era, way back in the sixties and seventies, some of the eighties. It took them a while to get out here. Have you talked to Letha Samuels yet?

Swent: No, I haven't.

McKenzie: The Samuelses and the McGinnises and the Adamses I think all came from Tennessee, Missouri, that country. And I know the Ed McGinnis that you may talk to--

Swent: Yes, I will talk to him. I have not interviewed him. I've talked to him.

McKenzie: Ed's grandfather or maybe his great-grandfather was a Civil War veteran. Letha was an Adams and they were Civil War veterans. So that group from the South or border states came out after the Civil War. There were a preponderance--rather than

Northern veterans who went back to Illinois and Minnesota and all that country in the North, so to speak--who were getting out of the South. It was intolerable for them to stay and be bossed by the blacks. So they came West.

Swent: You're saying "the blacks" in quotation marks.

McKenzie: Yes, yes. They, some few of them, found their way up there, went back into the hill county, the north end of the valley, and settled. And some of that country is still known as--there's an Adams Creek up there. The Samuels, Adams people, however, do trace their lineage [which he pronounces LINE-age], not in a general way--specifically--all the way back to the Mayflower. I don't know what branch of the Adamses and the Samuelses.

Anyway, the people up there got along well together. I was amazed, just a few years ago, when I started digging into relationships, how interconnected everyone was. I didn't know, when I was growing up, in my teens, how I knew everybody called everyone else "aunt" or "uncle" or "grannie" or whatever. You never quite knew whether they really were or it was a honorary sort of a title. Didn't know.

I'm not sure when all the mining got into this thing.

Swent: Well, the first mercury mines up there I think were started around 1860.

McKenzie: Yes, I heard there were some people trying to scrape out a cut for a road and some guy recognized, hey, that looks like what he knew as cinnabar.

Storekeeper as Financier

Swent: With your dad as storekeeper, your grandfather probably got into grubstaking, did he?

McKenzie: Well, that's kind of funny. Yes, grubstaking is a good way of putting it, but it happened not just with miners. Farmers had good years and bad years, and bad years the store would carry them on the books. Rarely did people come in and pay cash for anything, so they carried them on the books. And when the crops came in and they got paid for their crops, they'd come in and settle up the bill.

Swent: So your father was the banker, as well.

McKenzie: Well, yes, he never thought of himself as a banker, I don't think.

Swent: Financier.

McKenzie: But that happened right up to the time that the dam flooded us out. Now, there were what we thought were deadbeats. Oh, every once in a while somebody wouldn't pay. You'd see him drive a new car down the street, but they didn't pay their bill--that sort of thing, once in a while. Made my mother quite angry, a little Scot-Irish lady.

Swent: Did they charge any interest?

McKenzie: No, no, no.

Swent: That was usury?

McKenzie: But when the dam came in and we had to close everything out, there were no deadbeats; everybody paid what they might have owed, whatever it was they owed. There were no deadbeats. Everybody--the McGinnises, the Adamses, the Samuelses, some of the Gardners--all were interconnected. Gallagher. But the McKenzies and the Littles, the Clarks, Andersons, they all connected through marriage and what have you. I was amazed the people I didn't know I was related to! [chuckles] The fact was they were distant cousins or whatever. I just found out two or three years ago, a lady I've known all my life, who was related to a famous mountain man that's out here by the name of James Clyman--Colonel James Clyman--I found I was related to her. She's a third or fourth cousin of mine. The Mounts. We're connected with the Mounts.

Swent: Do you have any idea what kept these two groups separate?

McKenzie: Separate? They just never liked--a boy and/or girl, the boys and girls--don't forget, there weren't that many people up there. Just never quite got together.

Swent: Were the groups that traced back to Nova Scotia separate from those who traced back to the South?

McKenzie: You mean--

Swent: Was that a difference?

McKenzie: Well, there was a difference, but I don't think it was a conscious difference. There's a lady whose name now is Florence Mathison. She was married to a Gardner, divorced him and married Bud Mathison. He's since deceased. Her maiden name was Samuels, Letha's daughter. Florence (her nickname is Tot) and I are the same age. Well, I'm five months older than she is. We've known each other all our lives. Went with each other for a little while. And why we didn't continue I've never quite figured out. That would have been probably the only connection of the last group and ours. But it wasn't a conscious thing, "They are this and we are that." It just never happened.

Swent: What church did people go to?

McKenzie: All right, there was a church up there, which was probably interdenominational, but certainly any Catholics up there, and there were some very few, went either to Winters or came to Napa. The rest probably were either Southern Baptists or Presbyterian or Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian--almost the same thing. There was a church there. It was torched.

##

McKenzie: So there's a story about that, too. You'll have to talk to Letha. She told me it was torched. And I think the night watchman was one of the Swifts. He knows, I think, who torched it. Didn't do anything about it. It was probably either the saloon keeper or one of the saloon keepers or somebody paid by the saloon keeper. I think probably it was one of the saloon keepers or drinking establishments in town.

Swent: That was one role your family didn't have; no pub in the store.

McKenzie: No. But what did happen up there--because don't forget, this was long before Prohibition--in the store, which was a pretty good-sized establishment--it was maybe seventy by forty feet, the store, itself.

Swent: What was it built of?

McKenzie: Redwood. And then there was an additional warehouse put on later, almost the same size. It was a big building for that time.

Swent: One story?

McKenzie: Yes. And they had a cellar under the main building, where anything that had to be kept not refrigerated but cool was kept

on the stairs that went down--stairs about five feet wide went down, down, down to the cellar. And in the dirt between the foundation and the floor of the store, about halfway down the stairs, there was a keg of whiskey, so I understand. It wasn't there when I was growing up, but in the early days there was a tin cup and a keg of whiskey and a wooden spout, and anybody could go have a drink of whiskey if they wanted to.

Swent: Compliments of the house.

McKenzie: Compliments of the house. They weren't charged for that. Farmers would come in or whoever would come in and have their drink of whiskey, so I understand. Now, the ladies didn't like that, of course. I don't know whether my grandmother and her sisters and their husbands or whoever did away with it, but ultimately it was done away with. My guess is that when Prohibition came in it was done away with at that time.

Supplying the Knoxville Mine

McKenzie: Now, when the mines started up there--the Knoxville Mine, when I was growing up, was the mine. Manhattan was smaller, above it, and on the Lake County line, almost in Lake County. The Reed Mine hadn't come into existence quite yet, and until the Reed Mine started up, which almost was wholly in Lake County, Knoxville people traded, bought their supplies through Cook, McKenzie & Son.

Swent: The road went--

McKenzie: Twenty miles, about twenty miles. But, yes, there was a regular stage route, a horse-drawn stage, from Napa to Monticello to Knoxville to Lower Lake at one time.

So miners would come in, and we never--they were local people, and they were looked upon as local people. In fact, a goodly portion of them were. And so I'm not quite sure how dad got into that. I know that my brother and I (my sister had not yet been born), my brother and I were left \$400 by a great-uncle, my mother's uncle. And dad, I remember, had a family meeting at the kitchen table [chuckles] one day and wanted to know if we would let him--now, I was just barely into my teens, and my brother was maybe ten--nine or ten, something like that--if he could borrow our four hundred dollars, each: \$800. He had this opportunity to become a partner in a mine, and he

thought it was a good thing because--well, we may have been a little later into the thirties.

Swent: Was it Depression time then?

McKenzie: Well, yes, the Depression was there, and he thought it might be a chance to make a little money, and he could almost smell the war coming. Anybody with an ounce of brains knew that there had to be a war. And quicksilver [chuckles] was essential to the war effort. Every torpedo fired had its quicksilver, so he thought it would be a pretty good deal. He admitted he didn't know anything about mining, but his partner, he thought, did. He had no reason to think otherwise.

Swent: And who was his partner?

McKenzie: Well, let's see. As long as I'm going to be on the record, I might as well tell you who it is. Charles Wilson. Charlie Wilson, who was supposed to know about mines and mining.

Swent: This was not the Knoxville.

McKenzie: No, this was the Manhattan.

Swent: Had your father had any connection with the Knoxville?

McKenzie: Well, selling them everything they used, just about. The cookhouse bought all their supplies from him. Most of the people came this way to buy whatever they bought, clothes and so forth. Families that lived up there (it was like a company town) bought their supplies at Cook, McKenzie & Son for the most part.

Swent: Did he sell any mining equipment?

McKenzie: No, not the equipment--not the retorts and all the rest of that, but I remember seeing boxes of dynamite and boxes of powder and boxes of caps. Now, a lot of the farmers used that stuff, too, to clear stumps and trees out of fields and so forth. I thought there was an awful lot of it laying around in the warehouse just for that, but who was I? I was just a kid. So I don't know how much of that we sold them, but the people at Knoxville for a goodly number of years bought their stuff there.

Partner in the Manhattan Mine

- McKenzie: The Manhattan had been a mine that had been closed down, I guess, and Charlie and some of the others said there was still good ore there, might as well get it.
- Swent: Was he a Berryessa man?
- McKenzie: Charlie? He was Knoxville-Berryessa. Upper northeastern Napa County man, so to speak. But as a young teenager, I didn't pay much attention to what was going on. If dad wanted to get in the mining business, that was fine with me. The money that we inherited--a fellow by the name of Harry Mulcreavy left it to us. He was the city and county clerk of San Francisco for years and years and years and years. He was an employee of the city and county clerk of San Francisco, so I understood, when the earthquake struck. And he saved--how much, I don't know--but he saved a lot of records, so without having seen the official documents, the family story is that he was made city and county clerk of San Francisco for life. Harry Mulcreavy. My mother's uncle. He left \$400 to all of his grand-nieces and nephews. He left, what I understand--and this is just family myth, I think--he didn't leave any to his wife. They didn't get along very well. The balance--and he was quite wealthy--being a politician in San Francisco in those days paid off [chuckles]--he left it all to the Catholic Church! So I heard. Now, whether there's any truth in all of that I'm not sure, but that was the family story.
- Swent: Family stories are often true.
- McKenzie: Yes. They're often exaggerated or minimized, whichever side of the question you're on!
- Swent: But anyway, your dad wanted to take this money.
- McKenzie: So he got a stake in the mine, and they built a bunkhouse, they built a cook house--
- Swent: Was it just the two of them?
- McKenzie: Oh, no. Oh, the two of them as investors, yes.
- Swent: They were sole partners?
- McKenzie: Yes.
- Swent: And Wilson had some mining experience.

McKenzie: Yes, supposed to have had. I guess he had. I went up there for a while in the summertime.

Swent: Tell me about that.

McKenzie: Well, to me it was a big adventure. I didn't recognize that mining quite often can be like drilling for oil. You get more dry holes [chuckles] than you do oil. We didn't realize that we were sitting on a fortune in gold. Of course, the technology didn't even exist. It hadn't even been thought of, the technology you need to extract that gold. What we got was quicksilver. And I remember Charlie taking me into a couple of old shafts with our canary and showing me pockets of pure quicksilver.

Swent: Liquid.

McKenzie: Liquid. Lay in a little hollow, and it would be black, and he'd say, "Can you see that?" And I'd say, "See what?" It looked black to me. All we had were miner's lamps. And he took a little stick, and he went like that [demonstrating], sort of put the black scum aside, and you could see the quicksilver. He says, "That's the toughest stuff in the world to get out of here." He said, "I'd rather work with cinnabar."

Swent: You say shafts. Were they descending or were they horizontal?

McKenzie: They were horizontal.

Swent: You just walked in.

McKenzie: You walked in.

Swent: Did they have tracks or trains?

McKenzie: Oh, yes. They had tracks for cars. Mostly manpower to get it out. There were some chain outfits that went from a standing engine at the mine mouth back in that you could wrap it up and bring it out.

Swent: With a chain.

McKenzie: Yes.

Swent: What was the power?

McKenzie: I don't know. It sounded like, probably, a one-lung or two-lung gas engine.

Swent: And you say you went in with a canary. A real live canary?

McKenzie: A real, live canary in a cage. There may have been some technology available to be able to tell when you're walking into that stuff, but they didn't know what it was. Charlie didn't know what it was. He said, "The bird is the best," which scared us half to death. Which is what he wanted to do, I guess, too. He didn't want us to wander around exploring.

Swent: Right. You had carbide lamps? Or were they electric?

McKenzie: Carbide.

Swent: What kind of clothes did you wear?

McKenzie: My usual outfit.

Swent: Which was what?

McKenzie: Big heavy brogan shoes.

Swent: Leather?

McKenzie: Oh, yes, leather. Overalls.

Swent: Denim?

McKenzie: Oh, yes. Bib overalls. And cotton shirts, good cotton. As kids, when we had to wear a hat--and I can't remember when we ever did--I don't think I ever owned a hat; we wore caps as kids.

Swent: Made of wool?

McKenzie: Yes. BVDs, that was our underwear.

Swent: Grey?

McKenzie: They probably were! [chuckles]

Swent: Or red.

McKenzie: No, they weren't red. They were off-white. [chuckles]

Swent: Did you wear the cap in the mine, then?

McKenzie: No, all I had to do at the mine--I was supposed to pay my way, I guess. I'm not sure what--

Swent: Did you wear the cap?

McKenzie: No. Nothing. No.

Tending the Quicksilver Furnace and Condenser

Swent: No protective gear at all.

McKenzie: Well, I didn't have to. What I was doing was seeing that the bottom end of a big rotary furnace that was on a tilt--the ore would come in, slide down this rotary furnace, which probably was ribbed on the inside, and at the bottom was this oil, like on a machine gun--it was just like, in later years, the handles on that thing were like a fifty-calibre machine gun--and you'd squirt oil, which was ignited by a pilot light so that the heat, fire, went up in this rotary furnace. And the heat, I guess--because somebody had got it all figured out--the cinnabar, crushed (after it went through the crusher and came down into this thing), turned to gas, and the gas then left it and went up into a series of big pipe condensers. At the bottom of each pipe was a small hole, and under that, in a trough of water, sat these cast iron pots. As this gas condensed, it came down in the form of quicksilver.

And that's about all I know about mining, except there, when the temperature got to a certain point, it was time for more oil, more fire to keep the temperature up.

And I had a dark piece of glass--I didn't even wear dark glasses--I had a dark piece of glass and I could take a look in there once in a while, and with a stick close to the little vent, peek into the peephole. And I had to sit there and do that for about four hours a day, not realizing that I was probably breathing a considerable amount of that gas. I know it escaped. We know the technology, again, wasn't good enough. Either that or we didn't have enough money to buy a--to contain all the gas.

Swent: These condenser pipes. How big were they?

McKenzie: About that big around. [demonstrating]

Swent: Sixteen inches diameter?

McKenzie: Probably. That's close enough.



Quicksilver pot from the Knoxville Mine, December 1962.

Photo by Robert E. McKenzie.



Cook & McKenzie Store, circa 1905. W.D. McKenzie, Bob's grandfather, is third from the left.



Cook, McKenzie & Son, Monticello, California, early 1950s.

Photos courtesy R.E. McKenzie.

Swent: Okay. And they were made of just regular metal pipe?

McKenzie: Looked like it to me. I don't know, [chuckles] I don't know whether they were steel or cast iron, but I guess it was steel.

Swent: And they were in loops, and at the bottom of each loop was a flask.

McKenzie: Yes.

Swent: When one flask got full, how did you--

McKenzie: I didn't. Somebody poured it into a flask.

Swent: Put another pot in there.

McKenzie: A flask about yea long [demonstrating], about that big around. Weighed about--I want to say seventy-six pounds.

Swent: It's a standard size.

McKenzie: A quicksilver flask. Isn't it seventy-six pounds?

Swent: I think so.

McKenzie: I know it was the heaviest seventy-five pounds I ever lifted in my life because there was still a little bit of room in there for it to move.

Swent: Hard to carry.

McKenzie: And it was heavy, very heavy. The cast iron flask was heavy just by itself, for me.

Swent: So was there awareness that this was dangerous? Did you know that the fumes were dangerous?

McKenzie: No. Nobody else did.

Swent: Somebody told me that there were jokes about the people that worked at the mercury mines. They had to live on scrambled eggs because they couldn't chew.

McKenzie: Well, that's true. They lost their teeth.

Swent: Were you the one who said this?

McKenzie: I don't think I was, but I've heard the story. Oh, yes. They got black lung, just like coal miners. Their lungs went to Hades, I guess.

Swent: Were any of the miners there that you knew?

McKenzie: Not that I knew that had that problem, but--and I didn't stay there all that long to have that kind of a problem.

Robert McKenzie, 1920: The Joys of Being a Boy in Berryessa

Swent: Was your mother worried about your being there?

McKenzie: Not really, no. That's another thing about living in Berryessa. From the time you're eight or nine, we all had our own .22s--rifles. We'd get a lecture on how to use it and were turned loose. In the summertime if you weren't working--late in the summer--picking prunes, or in my case, stocking shelves in the store, doing a little something--trying to learn how to work was what it was because we didn't work very hard--we were out in the creek bottom. We'd put in one of the pockets in the bib overalls some salt and some pepper and let it all mix up. And had a box or two of .22 ammunition in a pocket, a hunting knife on our belt, and we'd go out and we'd shoot bigger birds, or we'd put trout line in the creek and check it every so often for fish or catfish. We'd go up into the hills and shoot rabbits or squirrels, whatever got in the way. And we'd go leave in the morning and come back at dark. We would feed ourselves: butcher these things and put them on a spit and build a little fire.

So, while maybe some of the mothers worried, that's just the way life was up there. They had their hands full running a house and younger kids and hand-washing for the most part, early on. Hot water heater in the house, rather than having a big tub on a wood stove, was quite an innovation. Electricity, when it finally got there--oh, heavens to Betsy, then we could refrigerate things, finally. Ice had to come from Napa. You can imagine the loss [chuckles] between Napa and Monticello--just to put ice in an icebox.

Swent: When you went up to the Manhattan, did you stay overnight there? You lived there?

McKenzie: I did for two or three nights, then I'd come home. I enjoyed going. It was a big adventure for me to go to the bunkhouse

and eat and drink whatever they did. They wouldn't let me have coffee. They made me drink lemonade, but they had pitchers. I mean, they fed well.

Swent: How many people worked up there?

McKenzie: There were probably a dozen.

Swent: All single men living in the bunkhouse.

McKenzie: Yes, for the most part. There may have been one or two lived in some of the old, unused shanties down at Knoxville, which was only two or three miles away.

What we think happened--the reason Dad got out--

Swent: One quick question. Was the cook a woman or a man?

McKenzie: No, the cook was a man.

Swent: Okay.

McKenzie: We think that the good ore, the best ore, Charlie was taking over to an old retort, little brick oven, a small retort, and we think he was turning it into silver in the retort, which is what you do with the very rich ore anyway. You wouldn't run it through this series of pipes; you would lose too much of it. Good ore went into the retorts. We think he had his own retort. In fact, we're pretty sure of it.

Swent: He was up there on the property.

McKenzie: He was on the property.

Swent: Your dad was down at the store.

McKenzie: Right, in the store. Dad wouldn't have known what was going on anyway, if he'd been there. He was just like me. I didn't know what was going on. I just did as I was told and had fun. We think that's what happened. We think that all the shipments of mercury out of the Manhattan, that all the good ore that came out of those shafts, tunnels, rather, didn't get to the partnership. They went to Charlie. I don't know for sure, and I'm sure--who around might know something like that? Have you talked to Ed MacDonald?

Swent: No. I hope to, but I haven't.

McKenzie: He's another one that might shed some light on that, because what I picked up was just vague stories, and sometimes Dad would be talking to Ma at the dinner table. I'd hear, not understanding what I heard. That sort of thing.

Swent: But you must have been disappointed if it was your money.

McKenzie: Well, we didn't really worry about it too much because we knew that sooner or later, when he was able, that he'd pay us back. He did. But if Dad thought it was a good deal, it was a good deal. If you got whipped doing it, you got whipped doing it. Which for me, at least, meant that I learned somewhere [chuckles] early on, that there were downsides to this business of living! It wasn't all fun and games, hunting and fishing.

Swent: Were you paid for working up there?

McKenzie: No, it was just fun. It was almost like we were partners, but we weren't. But we knew that our money had helped get us in there. But I don't think Sandy ever went up there. I don't think so.

Swent: So did your dad lose, or did he make even? Do you have any idea?

McKenzie: Oh, my guess would be that he lost, but I don't know that. It cost money to put all that equipment in there.

Swent: The retort was different. You called the other one the furnace?

McKenzie: Yes. The furnace--I forget. I'm looking at this through an unknowing teenager's eyes, but the furnace was about yea big around. [demonstrating]

Swent: Five feet in diameter.

McKenzie: And it was probably ten, twenty, thirty feet long.

Swent: And it was left--

McKenzie: On a slant.

Swent: Left on a slant, okay.

McKenzie: And there were gears down there that turned it--gears on the outside of the thing. I don't remember seeing them, but it must have been that there were baffles, circular baffles, in there, otherwise all the ore would come down to the bottom.

- Swent: Do you remember that it had any name? Because sometimes they named these things for the person.
- McKenzie: I don't know if it had any name. If it did, nobody ever told me about it or showed it to me. The retort I saw was maybe five or six feet high and maybe roughly five or six feet square. And if you've seen a firing chamber on some of today's potters, it's very similar to that.
- Swent: I think I've seen a photograph of that old retort there, actually. Wasn't it there?
- McKenzie: Right. And I'm not sure how they extracted the gas out of there, but they must have had a pipe that went up and came back down. I never inquired, never fussed. I just knew that that was a retort. Somebody explained it.
- Swent: And that's a simpler process than the furnace?
- McKenzie: Oh, yes. And it was much tighter, so you didn't lose, I guess, practically none of the gas. And if you didn't lose the gas, it had to turn into quicksilver. How they did it and how they separated it, I don't know.
- Swent: The photo that I remember seeing was a brick or a masonry chimney of some sort.
- McKenzie: Yes, it had a chimney, a short chimney and smokestack. But I never thought that much about it; I just knew that's where the good ore went, you know? So actually, when I start thinking about it, that was a lot of fun up there. And I liked that country. I like that kind of country, anyway. I didn't know what was going on. It didn't worry me, didn't bother me. That must have been about the time I was more worried about girls than I was about--
- Swent: Probably! Late thirties.
- McKenzie: So after I got through there, I went to high school in Winters. We went to high school in Winters rather than Napa. Ten miles closer. That means at least an hour less travel time per day, going and coming.
- Swent: And a smaller hill to go over, wasn't it?
- McKenzie: Yes. We went down, for the most part, down Putah Canyon.

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Swent: You were just saying that you went to Winters High School.

McKenzie: Winters Joint Union High School.

Swent: But you were working in the mine, then, maybe before you went to high school?

McKenzie: Yes, probably. Or I was just beginning high school.

Swent: No laws against child labor then.

McKenzie: No, not really. And it wasn't really labor. It was a big adventure. After high school I went to Sacramento Junior College. They call it Sacramento Community College now, but it was Sacramento Junior College. There weren't many junior colleges back then. There were only four or five in the northern part of the state. Now every little crossroads has one. I didn't learn too much at Sacramento Junior College. I took nothing but art, and I was a coxswain on the crew, a York racing crew.

Swent: But what happened with the mine? How did your father pull out of the Manhattan project?

McKenzie: I don't know, except I imagine that once he found out that it wasn't producing the revenue to cover expenses (this is just a guess, because he never talked much about it) that he just shut it down, turned Charlie off. Charlie didn't have any money. He was supposed to use his expertise in lieu of cash. And Dad just said, I can't lose any more. I'm not making anything, and I can't afford to lose. And chopped it off. That would be the end of it.

Swent: And the end of the friendship, too?

McKenzie: Well, in a way, yes. Dad was sort of an easy-going guy, and he never really--I can't ever remember seeing him angry. He never really got angry that I can remember. If he did, he never showed it.

Swent: He didn't own the claim?

McKenzie: No, that would have been leased. I don't know who owned that Manhattan back then. Who was it? Knox? I don't know. Whoever owned it, Dad didn't own it. And he didn't make anything from it. And probably lost some, but I don't know that.

Swent: There were several people with names beginning with W that were involved in it, I think. Wilson and then Wilder and Wacasser and a lot of people with Ws.

McKenzie: Oh, involved in the Manhattan?

Swent: But as far as you know, it was just the two, McKenzie and--

McKenzie: I think it was just the two, because Dad seemed to have control, actual control. When he said stop, everything stopped--all the supplies for the cook house, for instance. Lots of the hardware, all that stuff Dad probably got at cost, at wholesale, but big machinery, no. I don't think so. My guess--I don't know why this pops out of some long-dead cell back there, but even the equipment probably was second-hand from some other mine. I don't know where.

Swent: They often did that.

McKenzie: Maybe Knoxville or New Almaden or wherever it came from. But I doubt that it was spanking new. That would just be a guess because nobody ever told me one way or another. It seems logical to me somehow.

Sacramento Junior College and Teacher John Britton Matthew,
Marvelous Gentleman

McKenzie: After junior college in Sacramento, where I fulfilled my lower-division major and didn't have anything else at all--I didn't have English, I didn't have a foreign language, I didn't have anything except crew. I was a good coxswain. And art--I took just about every art course they could throw at me over there.

Then came World War II and three years, three months, three weeks. Two years overseas in Europe. And when I got home, I thought, well, a good way to get some of the kinks out would be to go back to junior college, so I went back to Sacramento Junior College in 1945, and lived with the head of the art department, was a student instructor in a couple of classes.

Swent: What was his name?

McKenzie: Matthew--John Britton Matthew, without the "s"--just Matthew. A marvelous gentleman, until cancer caught up to him about seven or eight years ago. A sweetheart of a man. I don't have

maybe all that much polish, but what polish I do have came from living with the Matthews for two years.

We didn't rush right in and have supper. His wife, Marjorie, did not work. And they lived on North Avenue in Sacramento, not too far from the college there, a quarter to about a half mile. But John and I had a glass of wine before dinner, talked over the day. And if I had anything troubling me he wanted to know what it was; we'd talk about it. And we'd go in and have a nice dinner. Every Friday night was candle-light. Little touches of something or other that a farm boy would never have had. So I was very grateful to him for that.

Then I decided, well, I'd go down and I'd see an old army buddy of mine who lived in San Jose. He said, "You've got the G.I. Bill.¹ Why don't you go to school?" That was a good thought! So I started doing the book work for that, and found out that my major was complete, art. But I had to start at the beginning, really, you know--English and history and math--everything you have to have. So I started at the beginning, in 1947, at San Jose State College. And I finally got out of there--when was it? '51.

I got out of there with a bachelor's, with a major in art and a secondary public school teaching credential. Came back to teach here in Napa, but a friend of mine, who I went to school with in San Jose, beat me by a day. So I went back home to Monticello and worked in the store. And I started doing the "News Notes" from up there for the Register.

Reporter and Photographer for the Napa Register

Swent: The Napa Register.

McKenzie: And started taking a few pictures. The dam was being built. I knew I had to get something, and finally I talked to people--this was a locally owned paper back then. Whit Griffiths and Mr. Francis owned it. Whit Griffiths and my family knew each other. I talked him into hiring the first full-time photographer he ever had. I don't know why I realized it, but I realized there was nobody at that paper that knew any more about photography than I did, and I didn't know much, but I was safe because there was nobody there. All my lower-division elective units at San Jose were photography. I thought, that sounds interesting. I've always been interested in it. And I'd been taking pictures with my mother's folding Kodak since I

¹ The G.I. Bill [Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944] funded studies for veterans of World War II.

was about eight or nine, I guess, I've always been involved in photography.

Then I had my credential in art and ultimately ended up with a lifetime credential in photography as well. I came down here and went to work for the Register as a full-time photographer, the only one they had for a while. Then there were two of us, and then there were three of us, and ultimately four of us before I quit in 1990. [Wrote the history column from 1990-1995.]

Meeting Dorothea Lange

Swent: Did you meet Dorothea Lange?

McKenzie: I met her up in Berryessa. She was up there shooting that Death of the Valley and I was working for the Register. And I was up there on occasion and shooting pictures, also, realizing I had lived there but I hadn't taken very many pictures up there, if any, and I'd better get on it, so I talked my bosses into letting me go up there a day, or two or three days a month, just to go wander all over the valley and shoot pictures.

I walked into the store one day. I knew the name, but I didn't have a face to put to the name. I knew about her picture. I knew the picture of the migrant mother. In fact, I've got a copy from the original negative. And I walked into the store early one afternoon in Monticello. My granddad called me over and said, "There's a lady here that takes pictures." [chuckles] "You ought to know her." And he introduced me to her, and we chatted for fifteen or twenty minutes, and she was just as sweet and encouraging as she could be.

A piece of advice she gave me that stuck, stuck so well that it was a piece of advice I gave my students: "Be true to your own vision. Don't let anybody tell you what to take or how to take it."

And I said, "Well, I'm stuck with this four-by-five." (I've got four-by-five, or 120 square.) She said, "Yes, but you don't have to compose it that way. Just because people give you film that way--people manufacture paper eight-by-ten--doesn't mean you have to make your composition to fit that. If you have a narrow composition or a tall, lean composition, be

true to your own vision." That little bit sort of stuck with me, and it made sense. And I figured part of what I became known for as a photographer was my sense of design and composition, and not the technical abilities, but design and composition I'm good at. And part of that goes back to Mr. Matthew who taught me design and composition from an artistic standpoint. And Dorothea Lange taught me to be true to my own vision. And taught me in a fifteen or twenty-minute conversation.

Swent: Was she already famous then?

McKenzie: Oh, yes. She came up there after having worked a story in Utah with Ansel Adams, and they remained great friends, but they could not work together. They simply could not work together. He was precision personified--technical, precise. And she was pretty much the way I am. Or I am [chuckles] the way she was, in that the picture's the thing. If I overexpose it or underexpose it, don't worry about that. Don't fiddle with the thing. Get the picture. And let somebody that's smarter than we are when it comes to technique and developing and printing do it. But you get the picture. So that's pretty much what she helped teach me.

Swent: How old was she at that time, I wonder?

McKenzie: Well, when did she die? '68? I think '68. And that had to be 1956, so I'm not sure how old she was. She was only about ten or eleven years away from death, so--

Swent: Did she seem like an old woman to you?

McKenzie: Well, not really. I don't know why I've always had the idea--maybe not always; certainly not always, not back when I was a teenager--but age is a mental thing. Now, she was tired both times I saw her. I've got a picture of her leaning against the very place where we talked in the store. But her face and her eyes were alive. She was a tiny, little thing. And she had had polio. She limped. She had a crippled leg. If you didn't know it, you wouldn't notice it, hardly, except when she was tired, when she sort of pulled that leg along.

Swent: You said you saw her twice.

McKenzie: Same place, same circumstances almost, except I already knew her the second time around. But then I went up there hoping that I would see her. I missed her two or three times. She and Pirkle Jones. He was her collaborator this time, instead of Ansel Adams. And I saw him a time or two without really

knowing. I kind of had a vague idea that he was her assistant. He wasn't. He worked with her. If you haven't seen the show at Vacaville Museum, you should.

Swent: I intend to. I really want to. After seeing your book about it.

McKenzie: Well, you really should. It's a good show.

The Flooding of Berryessa

Swent: I will. That's a tragic thing, isn't it, the flooding of Berryessa?

McKenzie: Well, yes. In retrospect, as I look at it now, forty years away--

Swent: Almost forty, isn't it?

McKenzie: It was probably a good thing. Well, the lady I was married to then I am no longer married to, and I wouldn't have met the lady I'm married to now. If anything had changed, I wouldn't have met her, right? If I'd stubbed my toe somewhere, I wouldn't have met her, [chuckles] probably. Those things. So as I look back on it, I think it's probably a pretty good thing. I think it was for most people. And I don't think you get many of them to admit it.

It was an ideal place to live. Whether it would be today or not, with the influx of people into California, forty years of the increased population would have found that place, and what they would have made of it, I don't know.

Swent: It's better if it's under water, you think?

McKenzie: Yes. That's what I think. We've got our memories, those of us that grew up there. I think that for almost all of us, it was better. We've all ended up pretty well, pretty well.

Some Thoughts on Gold Mining and Greed

Swent: How did you feel about the McLaughlin Mine coming in? Did you have any feelings about that?

McKenzie: Well, the only thing that bothered me about it, and still does bother me about it, to a degree, is the motivating factor. And I think we've got so much of it in this country today, a lot of people don't recognize it.

Swent: Which is?

McKenzie: Greed. Tiny flakes of gold, so small you have to despoil part of the country to get them. And despite the rules and the regulations and the contracts signed, that country will never be the same again.

Swent: No, it's true.

McKenzie: And the wildlife won't be the same. Nothing will be the same. Once you do that, you can't go back. You can't put it back. And those are the reasons I don't like some of these huge things. If there had been some way of extracting that gold, like saying we can put 5000 men and their families to work, doing it by hand or almost by hand, then I'd have thought, well, maybe. Life is nothing but a series of compromises and tradeoffs. But to go in there and move literally mountains, after gold, of all things, I'm always a little uneasy at that. I recognize I can't do anything about it. I mean, if I could do anything about greed--

Swent: [chuckles] I wish you could!

McKenzie: Yes. There would be a tremendous number of politicians out of office walking the streets. I don't have anything to go on, but my guess would be that at least 70 percent if not more of the politicians today are motivated by personal greed, if for no other way than to say, boy, look at the retirement I get from two terms in Congress or a term or two as governor or whatever.

Swent: Or both.

McKenzie: I can't. This present election--if I weren't so old, I think I would become violently ill. I haven't heard a word. Kathleen Brown says, "I've got a plan." I think, "Well, that's good. That's better than I've heard from the other guy." But for the most part they've been slapping each other around. Huffington: I wouldn't trust him as far as I could pick him up and throw him. I don't like the idea of anybody buying a seat, so flagrantly--[chuckles] at least, out in the open. I'm not sure that Dianne Feinstein is that much above all the rest of the politicians except when I see what she did in the--it's not a sure thing yet, but it looks like she's going to save a

tremendous piece of desert down there. And I think that's a big plus on her side.

I haven't found a politician--Reagan. I could not fathom the stupidity of the people of California for electing that man as governor, especially two terms, the second time around. And then when they elected him president, I thought, oh, my. The people deserve what they get, I guess. Except that I'm one of those on the getting end of nothing.

Swent: Television has a lot to do with it.

McKenzie: I can't understand [chuckles] how people think. Or I can't understand the lack of thought. Too many people think with their emotions. Well, you want a little emotion. Good heavens, yes. You don't want to be a cold goldfish, either. But there's a balance to be struck, and I haven't noticed that in politics.

Swent: It's pretty hard to find these days.

McKenzie: The closest, I guess, in my memory--Roosevelt didn't find a balance, but he was sure the right man for the country at that time. Eisenhower was another. Right man at the right time. But since then I haven't seen much. Kennedy: I hate to say this about Kennedy because I liked the charm of the man, but I think he'd have been in deep trouble had he lived, because he had a lot of surface charm but I'm not sure how much smarts. And everybody should get by the first term. It's hard to imagine anybody except Reagan who didn't make it the first term. But I can't understand people putting that man in office twice here in California, and then go national and do it again.

The way it used to be when it came to two-party politics was that if your granddaddy and your daddy and all that were Republicans, you were a Republican. Same thing's true with the Democrats, although [chuckles] they've always been a little bit more fragmented group.

Of course, I registered to vote when I was in the service. Dad was a Republican; I'll be a Republican. Well, I guess except for Eisenhower, who was really, when you come right down to it, was a status quo, calm, peaceful influence at the time, and that wasn't a bad idea. But I haven't really seen a president that had the dynamics of Roosevelt. He wasn't the sweetest character in the world, but he was the right person. He did the things that had to be done, without much regard for how it sounded or how it looked.

Swent: He was president for a long time.

McKenzie: Yes. I think almost that last time was kind of stretching it. Well, it was stretching it. It killed him, I think.

Have you noticed Clinton? The aging process that has set in in just about three years?

Swent: Well, have we said about all we need to say about the McLaughlin?

McKenzie: I think we've said more [chuckles] than what we need.

Swent: I think we're getting off the subject here.

McKenzie: Well, it all interlocks.

Swent: Yes, it does.

McKenzie: You can't talk about the greed that prompts McLaughlin and Homestake without saying who let them do this, or why aren't there more people there, because it's more economic the other way. Why do you have to make quite so much? Make a little less. Put more people to work. I don't know. There are probably lots of factors in that equation that I have no knowledge of, but generally it comes down to boards of directors using the old excuse, "We have to do it for our stockholders." And the stockholders, probably if they were told they weren't going to make quite so much, either would accept it, as long as they're making something, or go put their money somewhere else, in the bank, maybe, or in the mattress. So greed plays a part all the way back to the stockholder.

If somebody offered me an awful lot of money to do something, I'm not sure how I'd react, to be honest about it. I don't know.

Swent: It's hard to turn it down.

McKenzie: So I don't know how I'd react. But not having that problem, and I have never missed an election, I feel I can gripe all I want to.

Swent: Well, I guess one of the biggest markets for silver is your photography.

McKenzie: Yes. I've got a show coming up. That's one of the reasons, almost, I had a problem with today, but then I worked it out. Let's see. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven of those

[demonstrating] photos will be in it, and I've got other photos that I'm matting and framing.

Swent: Is this the one in Carneros? Is this the show in Carneros that you mentioned?

McKenzie: Yes.

Swent: Well, you certainly have beautiful, beautiful photos.

McKenzie: Well, every winery in Carneros will be open that weekend, for tasting or whatever. And it's just that the McKenzie-Mueller Winery, my daughter asked me to put a show on for. And so I said I'd do it, and I'd forgotten how much work and what expense it was.

Swent: Well, you have beautiful things, beautiful.

McKenzie: Do you like wine?

Swent: Yes.

McKenzie: If you like wine, you should come up the 19th and 20th to Carneros. They have every winery--

Swent: Should I turn this off, Bob? I think we have covered the field pretty well. Thank you very much.

Regional Oral History Office
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Berkeley, California

Western Mining in the Twentieth Century Series
Knoxville/McLaughlin Project

Harold Moskowitz

NAPA COUNTY SUPERVISOR

An Interview Conducted by
Eleanor Swent
in 1994

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Harold Moskowitz dated October 12, 1995. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Harold Moskowitz, "Napa County Supervisor," an oral history conducted in 1994 by Eleanor Swent in *The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California*, Volume VI, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1999.

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Harold Moskowitz

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Harold Moskowitz

Harold Moskowitz served as a Napa County Supervisor from 1976 to 1988, during the years when Napa was the lead county in the permitting process for the McLaughlin Mine. He was invited in February 1994 to participate in the project, and the interview was conducted at his home on 22 July 1994. Scheduling was difficult because in addition to conducting his pressing ranch and vineyard business, he was getting married soon.

Although he was willing to be interviewed, at first he declined to sign the standard agreement form. In the end, however, he gave permission and we conducted a brief interview, despite interruptions by telephone calls, visitors on business, and birds hitting the picture windows of his beautiful home near Moskowitz Corners in eastern Napa County. The Moskovites have ranched in Napa County for three generations so vineyards, geothermal projects, and gold mines are new developments in a long history. He views them in the context of those who pit growth against non-growth, and puts himself in the position of favoring reasonable growth.

The tapes of the interview were transcribed in the Regional Oral History Office and the lightly edited transcript was sent to Harold Moskowitz for review in May 1997 and returned with almost no changes a year later. The manuscript was corrected and indexed at our office. The tapes are deposited in The Bancroft Library and are available for study.

The Harold Moskowitz interview is one of more than forty interviews which were conducted by the Regional Oral History Office from 1993-1999 in order to document the development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Knoxville District of Lake, Napa, and Yolo Counties, California, from 1978-1998, as part of the ongoing oral history series devoted to Western Mining in the Twentieth Century. The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. The office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Eleanor Swent, Project Director, Research Interviewer/Editor
Regional Oral History Office

May 1999
The Bancroft Library
Berkeley, California

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name HAROLD MOSKOWITE

Date of birth 8-26-26 Birthplace S.F.

Father's full name Geo Moskowitz

Occupation RANCHER Birthplace SONOMA CO.

Mother's full name DOROTHY MOSKOWITE

Occupation HOUSEWIFE Birthplace _____

Your spouse BEA MOSKOWITZ

Occupation HOUSEWIFE Birthplace ENGLAND

Your children SIX

Where did you grow up? NAPA CO.

Present community _____

Education HIGH SCHOOL

Occupation(s) RANCHER

Areas of expertise COMMON SENSE

Other interests or activities _____

Organizations in which you are active ROTARY, BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

INTERVIEW WITH HAROLD MOSKOWITE

NAPA COUNTY SUPERVISOR

[Interview 1: July 22, 1994] ##¹

Family in Napa County Ranching for Three Generations

Swent: Harold, do you want to say that you're aware that you're being taped?

Moskowite: Yes. Is it on?

Swent: Yes, it is.

Moskowite: I'm aware I'm being taped, and I'm aware that this will be the property of the University of California, and I have no problems with that. I refuse to sign it on paper, so it's perfectly okay with me.

Swent: All right, Harold. Let's begin by having you tell a little bit about your background and your life before you became supervisor of Napa County. Where and when were you born?

Moskowite: I was born and raised here in Napa County in 1926. My parents were agriculturalists. We raised cattle, sheep, and I grew up as a rancher. I attended schools in Solano County because they were closer to where we lived than the Napa County schools. I entered the navy when I was seventeen years old and stayed there until I was twenty. And after I got out of the service I proceeded to operate a ranch that I owned up at Lake Berryessa, where the Lake Berryessa is today. I stayed there from about '46 to '52, when they run me out to build the dam. And then I moved down to here, where I'm presently living since 1952, and I operated the ranch here. In 1975 I planted a vineyard here, 175 acres of vineyard, and have been operating in here ever since.

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

In 1976 I was elected to the board of supervisors, and I served in there until 1988.

Swent: I'm just going to interrupt you for a second. So you were not born on this ranch.

Moskowite: No, I was born ten miles from here.

Swent: I see. And your parents, did they come into California from some other place?

Moskowite: I'm a third generation Napa County.

Swent: Your grandfather was here as well.

Moskowite: Yes, my grandfather owned a ranch three miles from here. He bought it in 1914.

Swent: That's wonderful.

Moskowite: My dad operated it. My dad served in World War I, and I served in World War II. My son served in Vietnam.

Swent: And is he ranching?

Moskowite: No.

Swent: No. You have nobody in the family now that's ranching.

Moskowite: No, I'm the only one that's ranching.

Swent: How do you feel about that?

Moskowite: Well, unless they're interested in it, there's no sense in doing it.

Swent: It's a long tradition, though.

Moskowite: Well, it's a tough life.

Swent: Yes, it is, but you certainly have your roots well down here in Napa County, don't you?

Moskowite: Yes, I've been in Napa County all my life.

Swent: And the third generation. So you were ranching right here on this property. And how did you happen to decide to run for county supervisor? Had you been active in politics before this?

Moskowite: No, I never was active in politics. I was asked to run, and I didn't think I could be elected, and--

Swent: Who asked you to run?

Moskowite: Oh, I had numerous people. Another supervisor even asked me. And I didn't think that I was electable. I never was in politics before.

Swent: What made you think you weren't electable?

Moskowite: Well, I just didn't think I was known. I wasn't in politics. I didn't follow politics that close. But anyhow, I beat a person that was only in on one term, and she was a politician and had been in the school boards and different boards. I never was any elected office before.

Swent: What were some of the issues at that time in Napa County?

Moskowite: The same issues that we have today: taxes and crime and everything else. Nothing changes. It's the same old thing, only in a bigger way.

Swent: Napa was just beginning its big boom at that time in the sixties, wasn't it, when it really began?

Moskowite: Well, I didn't get elected 'til the seventies: '76.

Swent: That's right.

Moskowite: When I was a kid and my dad used to take me to town with him, the population of Napa was 3,500 people. Now it's about 65,000. When I went to school in Fairfield, the population was 1,000. Now it's 85,000, so you see how it has grown.

Swent: Yes. So what was the population in '76?

Moskowite: I couldn't tell you. I have no idea.

Swent: I went back and looked at some of the Napa papers for those years, just to get kind of a feel for it, and in '78--now, this is just after you had gotten settled in as supervisor--AMAX came in, was requesting permission to drill for geothermal resources. That was perhaps your first experience with mining.

Moskowite: Yes, they drilled for geothermal. There wasn't much land in Napa County that--they were interested in geothermal, mostly in Lake County, yes.

Swent: They did come to you.

Moskowite: Yes, they came to us. And I think we finally granted them permission to drill on the northern end of the county, close to Lake County, but evidently they didn't find anything because they didn't develop them. But, you know, there's hot water here in Napa County. Calistoga has a geyser and a lot of hot water. They have trouble finding water in Calistoga unless it's hot. We're on the tail end of a geothermal zone. But your geologists told me that where there is hot water like that, there's a good sign there could be gold in that area.

Swent: That's what they hope.

Moskowite: That's what they told me.

Swent: Which geologist was that?

Moskowite: Oh, I can't I think of his name. He was from--

Swent: Gustafson, maybe?

Moskowite: Gustafson, that's who it was.

Swent: Don Gustafson.

Moskowite: Yes, that's who it was, yes.

Measure A and Limits to Growth; A Perennial Issue

Swent: He was the one who came in first. There had also been issues of growth, I think; there was a controversy over a new shopping center, wasn't there?

Moskowite: Well, that's been an issue ever since I was on the board, and it's an issue today. Napa is a non-growth area. It only grows because they have to grow a certain amount, and they have what you call Measure A, which only allows about a hundred homes a year to be built in the county. It was voted in by the people.

Swent: When was that put in?

Moskowite: I don't remember what year it was, but it was during my term. I'd say probably around 1980, somewhere in there.

Swent: So you had pressure for growth and pressure against growth.

Moskowite: Yes--well, I don't think there's been a lot of pressure for growth as much as there's been a lot of pressure against growth. But what's going to happen one of these days is there's going to be no growth, been trying to keep growth out, and the legislature is going to pass a law that they'll have to grow or they'll do it themselves. You've got to have places for people to live. Whether we like it or not, California is growing. Even though we're in a recession right now, it will come back, eventually.

Swent: Was there organized opposition to growth?

Moskowite: Oh, certainly, certainly. They got a petition up and got enough signatures to put on the ballot.

Swent: Was it a group that actually--

Moskowite: Sure.

Swent: And it still exists?

Moskowite: It still exists.

Swent: What do they call themselves?

Moskowite: There are several groups: you have Napa County Farm Bureau, we've got different people who join in--Napans Against Growth, and I don't know, there's different organizations here. I don't know what's their names anymore, but they're all against growth.

Swent: Napans. That's what they call people who live here?

Moskowite: I guess so.

Swent: The Farm Bureau, of course.

Moskowite: Then, let's see, we have the environmental groups that are against it. I can't think of the name of the environmental group that's against it.

Swent: There's one called the Native Plant Society. I don't know if they're against growth, necessarily.

Moskowite: Probably are, too, because the only way to fool around with the plants. And then there's Greenpeace, and there's just all kinds of different groups that are against growth.

Swent: Have you been active in the Farm Bureau?

Moskowite: At one time I was on the board of directors of it, and I was president of the local farm bureau when I was a youngster, but I'm not a member now because I don't believe in what their beliefs are. Napa County is different from the rest of the farm bureaus.

Swent: What is their--

Moskowite: Well, they're against growth. They're against anything that's reasonable. All they want is vineyards. And now they're against that!

Swent: Oh? In what way?

Moskowite: Well, there are so many vineyards in Napa County that they just don't want to see more vineyards in. Everybody wants open space, but they don't want to pay for it. It's nice. Look at those hills, and somebody else has to pay the bills, and you can't do anything with it. And the County of Napa is against it. Every board, the majority is against any development in the county.

Swent: Was there ever any solid group of old Napa families? Of course, the Moskowites would be one of the old families.

Moskowite: Well, I'm not for a lot of growth, either. I'm not trying to say we should open up the county wide open, but I think there should be reasonable growth. Reasonable. You should be able to use your land in a reasonable way. Right now, in the county itself, unless you have 320 acres, you can't divide it. You cannot split a 319-acre parcel. It has to be a minimum of 160 acres. You can't give your kid a place to live here, a homesite, unless you have a 160-acre parcel with nothing on it.

Swent: That's a big parcel.

Moskowite: You better believe it.

Swent: There aren't too many of those left, I don't suppose.

Moskowite: Not too many.

Swent: Did you have a platform when you campaigned against this lady?

Moskowite: Oh, I don't remember now. I just got out and worked at it.

Swent: Called on people?

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: And visited people.

Moskowite: So I don't know why I got elected. I just lucked out, I guess.

Swent: People trusted you to do the right thing, I'm sure.

Moskowite: I hope they did. I tried.

Granting the Mine Permits

Swent: Well, you stayed on a good long time, so they must have been happy. Can you recall when you first became aware of this gold mine project?

Moskowite: Well, this Gustafson stopped and seen me the first. He visited with me, and he took me up there, and he showed me the holes they were drilling.

Swent: That must have been in '78 or '79.

Moskowite: Yes, somewhere in that neighborhood. Then I met other members of--

Swent: You mentioned to me once that you met a group at Oliver's Restaurant in Napa.

Moskowite: Yes, we met one time and they outlined what they wanted to do and stuff.

Swent: Do you remember the names of any of the people you talked to?

Moskowite: No, I can't remember.

Swent: Gustafson was one.

Moskowite: Probably, yes. Jack Thompson wasn't here at the time; it was somebody else here before him. I don't remember who it was.

Swent: You said you were pretty skeptical at first.

Moskowite: Well, you just didn't know--you know, they were talking big things and you just didn't know whether they were serious about it or not. You listened to them, but they did everything they said they were going to do, and more.

Swent: What sort of things did they promise?

- Moskowite: Well, it's reclamation and different things, you know. They didn't promise anything. They just told us what their project was going to consist of. They didn't promise anything. They told us what they were going to do and how they were going to do it, and they did it in a very cooperative manner, so I think they cooperated with the county very well.
- Swent: I think at first they thought that more of it would be in Napa County.
- Moskowite: Well, the gold mine is in Napa County.
- Swent: Right. But the impact, I mean, that turned out more to be in Lake County, actually.
- Moskowite: Well, I think the big impact--I think their biggest problem was with Yolo County. There was a thorn in the side. I think Lake County was happy to see them because it boosted Lake County. All their people who were going to be hired were from Lake County. Everything was coming up the Lake County side.
- Swent: Was that clear from the first?
- Moskowite: Well, that's some of the conditions Napa County set out, that they didn't use Knoxville or Berryessa Road.
- Swent: I see. Now, how did you arrive at that?
- Moskowite: Well, it was one of the conditions because it's a substandard road, and Napa County didn't want to bear the expense to have to put in a road that--and it would cause a lot more traffic on these roads up here and stuff, and we just didn't want any.
- Swent: That's the way they were going up at first, was over here by Berryessa, wasn't it?
- Moskowite: It might have been, but that was one of the conditions that Napa County had put on, that they could not use Napa County as a thoroughfare, that they'd come in the Lake County side.
- Swent: That came quite a little later, though.
- Moskowite: Yes, oh, yes.
- Swent: The first time you went up there, that Gustafson took you up there, he would have taken you up--
- Moskowite: Oh, yes, we went through Berryessa, yes.

Swent: Somebody told me that at first a lot of the people thought that they were really trying to get a geothermal project and were just pretending to find gold. Did you--

Moskowite: No, I didn't hear that. No, because as soon as they started drilling holes for gold samples, you know, they put holes--you know, I knew that country pretty well because I used to go up there before they ever did. I used to get certain rock out of there to build fireplaces and stuff.

Swent: The decorative rock?

Moskowite: Yes. I got the fireplace in that bar down there and the fireplace in my mother's house and another house I had all got that--

Swent: From Wilder?

Moskowite: Well, I don't know if it was Wilder. We got it from the old mine. I don't know who owned it.

Swent: It's awfully pretty rock.

Moskowite: Heavy rock, too.

Swent: It's beautiful.

Moskowite: It's got gold in it; that's what makes it heavy. And I guess quicksilver.

Swent: You didn't think of that, though, then, did you? Did you think you were dragging home gold?

Moskowite: Well, I didn't know about gold, but I knew it was quicksilver because they had been mining for quicksilver for years and years.

Swent: In fact, there were quicksilver mines over here in Napa.

Moskowite: Up at Knoxville.

Swent: And Oakville?

Moskowite: Oakville? I didn't know anything about that.

Swent: I think there was.

Moskowite: I didn't know anything about it.

Swent: Silverado had mines, of course. So who else was on the board of supervisors then?

Moskowite: Let's see.

Swent: You were the chairman.

Moskowite: I think Bill Chew and John Micolajic, I think. He lives down in American Canyon. And then there was Dal Marx, I think. Who the heck was the other person? Let's see. Chew, let's see, myself. How many does that make, four?

Swent: Well, that's four. Micolajik, Chew, Marx, and you.

Moskowite: Bill Chew.

Swent: Yes, Chew, Micolajik, Marx--

Moskowite: Dal Marx was St. Helena, Bill Chew was from where? Oh, I guess Sam Chapman might have been on it. Sam Chapman. I don't know. They're all supervisors. I can't tell--I don't remember what year--

Swent: It changed from time to time, yes. Now, Napa County had to get a new ordinance under the SMARA [Surface Mining and Reclamation Act].

Moskowite: Well, Napa County didn't have a mining ordinance because there was no mines. And then they had to come in with an ordinance for mines.

Swent: And reclamation.

Moskowite: Reclamation and all that. So there was a lot to be done, but the county--

Swent: That took quite a while to get done.

Moskowite: Yes, it takes time. The county moves slow. Counties don't move very fast. You know, just like you people had to get EIRs [Environmental Impact Reports]. All that stuff, too.

Swent: Who was Doug Sprague?

Moskowite: I don't remember.

Swent: He wasn't connected with your board?

Moskowite: He wasn't connected with the board. He might have been with

the planning department.

Swent: I guess he had something to do with getting this new mining ordinance approved. It had to be approved by the State Mining and Geology Board.

Moskowite: It might have been someone they hired, too.

Swent: Maybe he was a state person, right.

Moskowite: It might have been some consultant the county hired.

Swent: Well, the first announcement in the papers of the mine was on almost this same date, in 1980, fourteen years ago, that the big headline was in the Napa paper: "Gold At Knoxville." But you, of course, had known about it quite a while before that.

Moskowite: Yes, I knew they were looking at it, you know.

Swent: It's interesting. That year, the population of Calistoga, they announced, had jumped 98 percent.

Moskowite: They must have added ten houses to the place.

Swent: Almost double. Napa County population had climbed over 20 percent in the few years there.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: And so first thing--I guess you became aware that you had to get this mining ordinance.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: Who told you that, I wonder?

Moskowite: Well, our county counsel, I imagine.

Swent: I see. That was the first step? The first thing you had to do? And then you already had your planning commission, of course.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: Conservation, development, and planning commission. But they hadn't dealt with mining.

Moskowite: Well, we didn't have any mines.

Swent: No, no.

Moskowite: Napa County wasn't a mining county. I mean, they had some little mines up there in Knoxville, but they didn't have to have permits to do it. They just were done by individuals and pick and shovel, I guess.

Swent: How did you go about getting Napa named as the lead? Oh, you've got to get your phone. [tape interruption] Napa County was the lead county in getting the EIR and all of the approvals. How did this--

Moskowite: Well, I think they decided each county would have a representative from the boards, and after we got the three representatives, we elected a president.

Swent: This is the EDAC [Environmental Data Advisory Committee]?

Moskowite: EDAC, yes.

Swent: What was that?

Moskowite: It was an advisory committee. It wasn't a decision-making committee. Advisory.

Swent: Whom did they advise?

Moskowite: Their boards.

Swent: The respective boards. Can you remember--there's a gap in there. First of all, you've got this project that wants to come in, and you have three boards of supervisors. How did you happen to get together to form this EDAC? And also BLM [Bureau of Land Management] was in on it, I think, weren't they?

Moskowite: Well, yes, we had BLM on it. They weren't decision-making. They were just for advisory.

Swent: Who decided that Napa would be the lead county?

Moskowite: I think the reason that they decided that was because the biggest share of the mine was in Napa County.

Swent: Yes, but who said, "Napa is going to be the lead agency"?

Moskowite: I think the three boards probably made that decision.

Swent: They must have gotten together to talk about it.

Moskowite: Well, they did. They might have done it through their county administrators and so forth.

Swent: Well, who called--somebody must have made the first phone call.

Moskowite: I can't tell you what happened day-to-day, you know. Really, I don't remember how it come together. I know I was the representative for Napa County, and I don't know when that started. Like I say, there were the three members and then we had other people who attended meetings, like we had citizens that were against the development that attended meetings and would tell us their concerns and stuff.

Swent: And Twyla Thompson was the one from Yolo.

Moskowite: Yolo County. I don't remember who was from Lake County.

Swent: Was it Wilcox?

Moskowite: Might have been.

Swent: Or Day?

Moskowite: I don't remember. I think it was probably Day, I guess--yes.

Swent: Well, I'm still not--I'd like to get a clearer picture of how--somebody must have said, "Napa's going to be the lead agency, and Harold Moskowite as the Napa person is going to--"

Moskowite: Well, the board is the one that picked me, you know.

Swent: The board of supervisors?

Moskowite: The board of supervisors. There were five members. They asked me if I'd serve as the representative for the county, so I did. And I think probably the three counties got together and said, "Hey, it's too cumbersome to let each board of supervisors do it, that we each have a representative and advisory to the boards." You know, so it wouldn't be so cumbersome. Can you imagine fifteen people getting together and trying to make a decision on something? It wouldn't work out. So that's why we had a representative from each county.

Swent: On the EDAC.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: And then there had to be staff.

Moskowite: Yes, we had a staff member, you know, and things were recorded. I imagine the minutes were all recorded at the time.

Swent: Are those minutes kept in Napa County?

Moskowite: Well, I imagine each county had a copy of them. I don't know where the minutes are now. I don't imagine the county kept them because it's not that important now. They can't keep everything, you know.

Swent: No. You had some pretty stormy meetings at times.

Moskowite: Well, we had some people from Yolo county that were against the mine, you know, and they were very much against us--I say us--very much against Homestake putting that dam in back up there.

Swent: Yes, in the Davis Creek.

Moskowite: Yes, and so, you know, Twyla, she tried to smooth things over as best she could. Twyla wasn't against the project per se, but she had to represent her constituency, and her constituency was up in Capay Valley.

Swent: They came over here to Napa, to some of the meetings.

Moskowite: Oh, yes. They attended the meetings, and they addressed their concerns, and we listened to them. We did the best job we could in handling it. But, see, most of the mine--all the tailings and the mining stuff come into Napa County. Yolo County, I don't think has hardly any of the mine, and Lake County's got all the processing, so the only thing that Yolo County was really squawking about was the dam and doing the work.

Swent: And that was the dam that supplied to the project.

Moskowite: To the project.

Swent: It wasn't coming from the project.

Moskowite: It was the dam to supply the water for the project. And I understand when it was through, the dam was donated to Yolo County.

Swent: Yes. There was a lot of concern also about air pollution. Were people in Napa County worried about that?

Moskowite: No, I don't think Napa County was worried about it because it's so far away, you know, and of course the air quality board was

in on it. You know, the EIRs they did was tremendous to mitigate all the problems that had come up. You know, and after they get through the dam, they have to reclaim it, reclaim that ground. Big job.

Swent: Were there financial impacts in Napa County? Did you get any?

Moskowite: We tax them.

Swent: Taxes.

Moskowite: We tax the gold in the ground, we tax the stuff that's on top of the ground--it's a big--the impact was it was a big windfall for the county. Taxes up there were nothing. We're not providing any services up there. What services are we providing? Nothing.

Swent: They did have their office here in Napa for quite a long time. That brought in a few people.

Moskowite: Well, that was minor. But, see, they were being taxed for the gold that's in the ground, there's property worth, and then they're being taxed for all the facilities that are above the ground, so it's a real windfall for the county.

Swent: The taxes. You had to reassess everything. That takes a little while, I guess.

Moskowite: Yes, but the assessor's office handled it. I think we hired a special person just for taxes because we didn't know anything about money.

Swent: Pretty big windfall there. Was there much hiring from Napa County?

Moskowite: I think we hired a planner, and I think Homestake Mine paid for it.

Swent: This was a person on your planning commission.

Moskowite: Not commission. Planning staff. Yes, we hired a person. I don't know. Maybe more than a person. But I know we hired some extra help.

Swent: You had to.

Moskowite: And Homestake paid for it.

Swent: How was that managed? How can you do that?

Moskowite: Well, we just negotiated with Homestake. They wanted to get the project going faster. We put in some staff. Otherwise, it could take a long time to get it through.

Swent: Isn't that kind of tricky, though, for somebody that's applying for a permit to hire the people to process it?

Moskowite: They didn't hire. The county hired it. The county hired the people, but they [Homestake] paid for it.

Swent: Okay, because otherwise you'd be in trouble, wouldn't you? I mean, they couldn't hire the person to process their permit application.

Moskowite: Well, they could recommend a person. That would be no problem because our planning director has to approve of it, and the board of supervisors has to approve of it, so if it's not done right they're not going to approve of it.

Swent: Right. Well, let's see, they had to do the Environmental Impact Report? Statement? Both of them, I guess, ultimately. But they had to be presented to your planning commission first.

Moskowite: And then the board.

Swent: And then to the board. And you approved it fairly promptly.

Moskowite: Well, probably the planning staff looked it over and made a recommendation on it. That's what you have a planning staff for.

Swent: Yes, I think it was approved in 1982.

##

Swent: So that was quite a while.

Moskowite: What?

Swent: From '78 to '82. Four years.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: A long time.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: And your EDAC was meeting monthly?

Moskowite: Monthly, I--

Swent: Or more often maybe?

Moskowite: Whatever was necessary, I guess. We had a regular meeting date.

Swent: Where did you meet?

Moskowite: It was in Napa.

Swent: Where?

Moskowite: Board of supervisors chambers.

Swent: Then, a year after that, July '83, is when you certified the report.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: That's five years!

Moskowite: That's fast.

Swent: Is it?

Moskowite: Yes, for a project that size. For a project that size, that's probably fast.

Swent: And then Yolo County approved it nearly a year after that. They dragged their heels.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: But you and Lake County went ahead, Napa and Lake County.

Moskowite: Well, Lake County was reasonable to work with, and we tried to be.

Swent: The difference mainly was--

Moskowite: You know, the constituents that Twyla [Thompson] had up there in Capay Valley. That's it. And the board was reluctant to go ahead and approve it.

Swent: Was there any problem with having Napa and Lake go ahead and approve it when Yolo didn't?

Moskowite: I don't think that held them up with them not approving it.

Swent: No, I meant among the board. Were there arguments?

Moskowite: No, no arguments with me. I mean, we make our decisions; they make their decisions. We all have our own views, and they didn't want to go with it. That's their business.

Swent: Generally the people in Napa were okay about it, yes?

Moskowite: Well, it was so far out of the county and so far away from everything, people didn't even know where Knoxville is. They never heard of it before. There's no population up around there, so it's--

Swent: And it's really over the hill, too, isn't it?

Moskowite: It sure is.

Swent: Out of the way. [phone rings again] [tape interruption]

Moskowite: It's so far out of the way in an unpopulated area, people didn't think anything of it. Forty miles, fifty miles from town--and there was nothing in between.

Swent: Do you want to talk about anything else? And then we'll talk a little bit about the opening.

Moskowite: Well, like I say, it was a long, hard process for Homestake. They had to meet with so many different agencies. You know, it's just not only Napa County. They had to deal with the Bureau of Mines, and water quality and air quality and water resources board. They had a just numerous amount of people to deal with. And it's just unbelievable how great they was able to work it out. They had the personnel to do it with. And they had their attorney. Their attorney used to come to our meetings.

Swent: Do you remember which one it is?

Moskowite: Yes, the little red-head guy. What the heck was his name? From San Francisco. Goldberg was it?

Swent: Goldstein?

Moskowite: Denny Goldstein, yes. Yes, Denny Goldstein. That was him.

Swent: Ray Krauss, of course, came to a lot of meetings.

Moskowite: Yes, Ray Krauss. I think he come from Sonoma County. They hired him. And then Jack Thompson came down and took over.

He was a very easy person to work with.

Swent: Did many of the people live in Napa County that came to work for the mine?

Moskowite: No, I think one of the conditions were that they all come from Lake County, all the labor force had to come out of Lake County.

Swent: Some of the other personnel might have lived here, though.

Moskowite: There might have been a few, but it was very few.

Swent: I think Krauss lives in Napa County.

Moskowite: Yes, he might. He might. But, you know, they weren't worried about one or two people. They just didn't want fifty or sixty cars a day going up and down this road, so most of the people live in Lake County or come out of Lake County area. And probably some come out from over the hill from Williams or Capay Valley and that area, too.

Swent: Yes.

Moskowite: I don't know how many people the Homestake Mine hires now, but I imagine it's quite a few.

Swent: Several hundred.

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: So you approved it in '83, and then they started operating. Actually, I think they poured their first gold bar in '85.

Moskowite: That's when it was?

Swent: About two years later.

Moskowite: Well, they had a lot of construction to do, you know. They built a road to Lake County, and they put that pipeline in to Lake County and overpasses, and there was a lot of construction up there.

They had a lot of trouble with the unions. The unions were trying to organize them, and they're non-union. And they tried to get me in the middle of it. [chuckles] I stayed out of it.

Swent: How did they try to get you to--

Moskowite: Well, to make sure that they try to hire union help and to persuade them to hire union help or don't get no permit.

Swent: Are the unions very strong in Napa County?

Moskowite: Well, they're close to the Bay Area, you know. They're here.

Swent: This was the operators--

Moskowite: Operating engineers, carpenters. There's probably about half a dozen unions that would have been involved.

Swent: They stayed non-union, though.

Moskowite: Yes, they did. They were able to.

Swent: Do you want to reminisce about the opening?

Moskowite: Well, it's been so long ago since they opened it that I can't remember too much about it, except that I was invited to it. I met--Mrs. [Donald] McLaughlin was there and all the staff. They put on quite an event, you know. I think they served food and everything and toured the facilities.

Swent: You had to give a speech.

Moskowite: Yes, I gave a little talk. It was a very nice event.

Swent: Did you ever meet Dr. McLaughlin? Don McLaughlin?

Moskowite: No, I never met him.

Swent: Did you meet Bill Humphrey?

Moskowite: Yes, yes. Bill Humphrey. Is he still with them?

Swent: Yes. Well, he's retired now. Just retired.

Moskowite: Yes, I liked Bill. He was a nice guy. Yes, I met him. Does he live in San Francisco?

Swent: He lives out in Alamo. Or Danville. I've forgotten which.

Moskowite: Do you talk to him much?

Swent: Yes.

Moskowite: Tell him I said hello.

Swent: I will. Be glad to.

Moskowite: I'd like to see him sometime.

Swent: Yes, okay, I'll tell him that.

Moskowite: Yes, tell him to give me a call and come see me sometime.

Swent: I think he'd like that.

Moskowite: Yes. I'd love to have him.

Swent: Yes.

Moskowite: Who is the overall head of it now?

Swent: The president is a South African named Peter Steen, the president of Homestake. But the manager up at the mine is Ron Parker. Have you met him?

Moskowite: No, I don't think I have.

Swent: He's a younger fellow who came in from Missouri and is operating--he's the resident manager up there. Awfully nice young man.

Moskowite: Is Krauss still there?

Swent: He's still there, oh, yes.

Moskowite: What's his position?

Swent: He's environmental manager. He's also on the State Mine Board. He just got a big award recently, a national award for environmental work--very important, prestigious prize that he got.

Moskowite: That's good! He's a very nice guy.

Swent: Yes, he is. Did a good job on this.

Moskowite: I like Ray.

Swent: So, looking back on it, how do you feel about it?

Moskowite: I think it was great. I think it was a real asset to the county. I think Homestake has done a great job, and I think it's a real asset to the county and the citizens of Napa County. It doesn't hurt them. I don't think it has hurt the

environment any. And they got some of the resources out of the county. Which is great.

Swent: They're already looking forward to closing it down.

Moskowite: I know. Well, didn't they find another vein or something?

Swent: Well, they're looking. I think maybe they found some, but--

Moskowite: When do they think they're going to close down?

Swent: They announced the other day that they'd probably be closing down the mine in 2004. That's ten years away.

Moskowite: Well, that's a long ways from now. A lot of water can go underneath the bridge between now and 2004.

Swent: Yes. And I guess the mine they'll close a little sooner, and then they'll be processing until 2004, I think.

Moskowite: They sure got a big hole up there.

Swent: Yes, they do.

Moskowite: I flew over it there not too long ago.

Swent: Oh, did you?

Moskowite: Yes, it's pretty big.

Swent: I'd like to see it from the air. It must be--

Moskowite: Oh, it's quite a sight, yes.

Swent: Well, they're going underground. They have a little underground adit.

Moskowite: I see where they are going to a tunnel.

Swent: I don't know how much they're finding. They haven't announced it yet.

Moskowite: When they announce anything, do people get a report or something?

Swent: Just in the papers.

Moskowite: Oh, it's just what's in the papers.

Swent: Yes. That's all I know, yes. I know they're hoping. That would help your taxes, too, wouldn't it?

Moskowite: No.

Swent: Wouldn't it?

Moskowite: No. The more money the county gets, the more they spend.

Swent: What is the biggest employer in Napa County? The hospital?

Moskowite: I think the school district is.

Swent: School district. The state hospital.

Moskowite: And the state hospital. I think the school district is the biggest, probably the county. The county has 1,000 people working for them, more or less. I imagine the school district has quite a bit more. The state hospital used to be the biggest, but I don't think they are anymore. There are some big outfits. There's Syar Industries, and there's quite a few people work in telephone companies.

Swent: What is Syar?

Moskowite: Mining. They're gravel, sand.

Swent: Are they at several locations in the county?

Moskowite: Where Basalt is. You know, Basalt [Company]. They have a mine up in Santa Rosa. They have one over here in Cache Creek. They've got gravel pits over there. Pretty big outfit.

Swent: But that's not in Napa.

Moskowite: No, no. But I said they have several--that's the only one here in Napa, that Basalt.

Swent: Basalt. But that's been there for a long time?

Moskowite: As long as I can remember.

Swent: So there wasn't any permitting involved with that?

Moskowite: No, no. That's been there long before the permits. But I think it's considered mining.

Swent: Yes, it is.

Moskowite: It's open-pit mining.

Swent: But the neighbors don't object to that?

Moskowite: Well, it's been there before the neighbors got here.

Swent: Yes. Sometimes people don't like a quarry in their neighborhood.

Moskowite: Well, it's there. It's there to stay.

Swent: Yes. Everybody wants concrete, but no one wants a quarry.

Moskowite: That's right. That's right.

Swent: Do you maintain this blacktop road here? Is that your responsibility? That's quite a road.

Moskowite: Yes. And I've got to put some more in.

Swent: And the dam? Is that yours?

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: Do you use it for irrigation?

Moskowite: Yes.

Swent: It certainly makes a nice lake to look at. It's beautiful.

Moskowite: Yes, it's a good-sized lake.

Swent: It's lovely. Well, it's a nice place to live, all right. What would you do if they found gold on your property?

Moskowite: Sell it to 'em.

Swent: No problem, hm?

Moskowite: No. Well, they mined here at one time for quicksilver, I think, on this property.

Swent: Did they?

Moskowite: Yes. A lot of asbestos here. Behind me is asbestos. They don't mine for it any more, but they used to.

Swent: Now that is a problem!

Moskowite: Yes, I know. [loud noise] Those birds hit those windows all the time.

Swent: They never learn?

Moskowite: Well, it sometimes kills them. They finally kill themselves, really, you know. They just fly right into them.

Swent: Well, I don't have any more questions, Harold. Do you have anything else you'd like to say, that you remember?

Moskowite: Not really. My memory's not that great and, you know, it's been ten, twelve years since this all happened, so it takes a while for me to refresh my memory of all the things that did happen. Have you talked to anybody in the county about it?

Swent: No, you're the first one I've talked to. I'd like to talk to James Hickey.

Moskowite: Yes, Jim Hickey would be the person to talk to.

Swent: I've talked to him on the phone.

Moskowite: Yes, he'd probably give you more information than anybody in the country because he was the planning director at the time.

Swent: Right. And I've talked on the phone to Jay Corley.

Moskowite: Jay Corley I don't think would give you much information. Jim Hickey can really give you the most information. Jay could tell you, probably, where you could get it if he didn't have it.

Swent: And I haven't talked to anybody up in Lake County yet.

Moskowite: Howard Day--

Swent: I think he died.

Moskowite: Wilcox is still around. I don't know what he--. There was a colored gal. I forget her name. She was on the board, I think, at the time that was going on there. What was her name?

Swent: I haven't heard of a woman.

Moskowite: Yes, she's not on any more. I understand she moved out of the country when she was on the board.

Swent: And I had a date to talk to Richard Mason who worked on the

newspaper up there. Did you ever know him?

Moskowite: No.

Swent: But he's moving to Florida, so I couldn't get him. Well, I'll turn this off then. Thank you very much.

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Marion Onstad

NEIGHBOR AND EMPLOYEE OF THE McLAUGHLIN MINE, 1980-1995

An Interview Conducted by
Eleanor Swent
in 1995

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Marion Onstad, "Neighbor and Employee of the McLaughlin Mine, 1980-1995," an oral history conducted in 1995 by Eleanor Swent in *The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume VI*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1999.

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Marion Onstad, circa 1995.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Marion Onstad

Marion Onstad lives on a ranch across the road from the McLaughlin Mine headquarters on Morgan Valley Road and began working as a secretary for the project engineers in 1983 in a trailer equipped with a desk, a microwave telephone, and a fly-swatter. From 1985 to 1995 she worked for Homestake Mining Company, becoming secretary to two resident managers. She is uniquely qualified to observe the mine development as a neighbor and an employee from the beginning through its entire life.

We first met at DJ's pizza parlor in Lower Lake on 5 May 1995 to plan for an interview. Because she was very busy in the summer conducting tours of the McLaughlin Mine, we delayed interviewing for several months. The interview was conducted on 17 October 1995 in the Homestake office on Morgan Valley Road.

Her oral history recounts how the Onstads bought ranch property in Morgan Valley in 1964, acquired some cattle, built a log house from a kit, and used it as an escape from the high-tech world of "Silicon Valley," where she was a secretary for nineteen years. In 1980 they moved there to reside, thinking it was "like the Wild West." At almost exactly the same time, Homestake announced its gold find next door. When she learned that Davy-McKee was seeking a secretary, Marion applied for a job and hurried to finish canning tomatoes before starting to work in an office again. She tells how she welcomed some of the changes: paved road, telephone, and electricity. When the project was handed over to Homestake, she continued with them, becoming secretary first to the mill manager, Joe Young, and later to resident manager Jack Thompson and his successor Ronald Parker. In this capacity, she organized workshops for better clerical personnel relations. When she retired in 1995, she undertook to run the mine tours for Homestake, which she still does.

Recently she has published a coloring book for children which features Rodney the Roadrunner and tells how miners respect the earth. The Onstads also run some cattle on the mine property, an arrangement of mutual benefit: the cattle have good grazing and Randolph Onstad maintains the fences.

The tapes of the interview were transcribed in the Regional Oral History Office and the lightly edited transcript was sent to Marion Onstad for review in September 1997. She reviewed it and returned it promptly with almost no changes. The manuscript was corrected and indexed at our office. The tapes are deposited in The Bancroft Library and are available for study.

The Marion Onstad interview is one of more than forty interviews which were conducted by the Regional Oral History Office from 1995 to 1998 in order to document the development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Knoxville District of Lake, Napa, and Yolo Counties, California, from 1978-1998, as part of the ongoing oral history series devoted to Western Mining in the Twentieth Century. The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. The office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Eleanor Swent, Project Director, Research Interviewer/Editor
Regional Oral History Office

May 1999
The Bancroft Library
Berkeley, California

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library

University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Marion Adelaide (Shingledecker) Onstad
 Date of birth 2-20-38 Birthplace Pine City, Minn.
 Father's full name Earl Henry Shingledecker
 Occupation Farmer Birthplace Linnak Township, Minn.
 Mother's full name Lucelia Clara (Krech) Shingledecker
 Occupation Housewife Birthplace Inver Grove, Minn.
 Your spouse Randolph Selvin Onstad
 Occupation Machinist/Rancher Birthplace Plentywood, Mt.
 Your children Rachel Leigh (Onstad) Heher
Aaron von Onstad
 Where did you grow up? Pine City, Minn. on a dairy farm
 Present community Lower Lake, Ca.
 Education H.S. Yuba College, Clear Lake, Ca.
H.S. Pine City, Minn. Cert. E.E.E., Yuba Co.
 Occupation(s) Secretary - Certified Childcare
Tour Guide - Rancher - Teaching -
 Areas of expertise Secretarial, Guitarist, Songwriter,
Children Writer, Preschool Teaching, Ranching,
Tour guide - Mgmt of Farmers' Market.
Mgmt of Writer's Grp.
 Other interests or activities _____
Music, Writing, gardening, Mgmt of Farmers'
Mkt and Writers' Grp., Canning, Horse & Cattle Mgmt
 Organizations in which you are active Ca. Cattlemen's Assn,
Writers' Org., L.L.K. Farmers' Mkt, Women-in-Agriculture

INTERVIEW WITH MARION ONSTAD

NEIGHBOR AND EMPLOYEE OF THE MCLAUGHLIN MINE, 1980 TO 1995

[Interview 1: October 17, 1995] ##¹

Growing Up on a Minnesota Dairy Farm

Swent: This is Eleanor Swent interviewing Marion Onstad in Lower Lake, at the McLaughlin Mine on October 17th, 1995.

Marion, I'd like to have you begin by telling us the story that will end up here, at the McLaughlin Mine. Where were you born, and where were you brought up? Minnesota, as I remember?

Onstad: Right. I was born February 20, 1938, in Pine City, Minnesota, which is just a little town of about 2,000 people, a little farming community.

Swent: Not mining.

Onstad: No mining in Pine City. In northern Minnesota, yes. We had mining in the northern part of the state. My father--

Swent: Pine City was in the southern part of the state?

Onstad: It's about halfway between St. Paul and Duluth. And when I'm talking about mining in the northern part of Minnesota, I'm talking about the Iron Range up there.

Swent: But you didn't know about that when you were growing up.

Onstad: No, because I left home when I was eighteen and never saw a mine until I came here, until I moved across the highway from the mine. That's the first time I'd ever been exposed to mining.

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Swent: I interrupted you. I'm sorry. You started to say about your father.

Onstad: Well, he was a dairy farmer. We had a few dairy cows and I saw what hard work that was, and my parents never left the farm. To go someplace for a day was very difficult because you always had to be home for chores.

Swent: Did you have mechanical milkers?

Onstad: Yes, yes. They had that, but--

Swent: They still had to be operated.

Onstad: They had to be operated. You had to be there in the morning and in the evening, and just a lot of hard--

Swent: And you don't take a day off.

Onstad: No, you don't take a day off. Or at least [you have] to be back in time to do the evening chores.

Swent: Did you and your mother help?

Onstad: We helped when my father went deer hunting. Then my mother would end up doing the chores, so we would go out with her to help. But normally my mother and father did the milking. My older brother helped when he was home. He went to the army and once he saw Paris, he never came back home! [chuckling] But my sisters mostly helped with the housework; they were not outside girls. I was more--I liked to tag along with my father. I'd help him, even with the machinery in the fields. Looking back at it now, I think I was his son after my brother left, sort of replaced him.

Swent: I'm interested in this because part of my family background is Iowa farming, and as I look back on it, there was a very definite division of labor, and I think it was traditional. I don't think it was just my family. But the women did the gardening and the chickens--the fowl, whatever they were; and the men did the animals and the fields and that sort of thing. Now, is this true, still, in your generation?

Onstad: Well, that was true when I grew up, too, although I think I just more had a general interest in the outside. I got involved with animals quite a bit. I was in the 4-H as a child. I raised hogs.

Swent: I think that maybe changed from the days that I remember, which was an earlier generation. It probably broadened more, that girls could do more later.

Onstad: Well, the 4-H organization per se is for girls and boys. But I enjoyed that. I used to play with the cows. I remember we would pretend it was a rodeo, and we'd ride the calves and get thrown off. I think now how careful I am with my grandchildren and what we did as children, climbing up in the hay barns. I wouldn't think of letting the grandchildren do those activities now, but we never broke a bone in our life, and we're healthy.

Swent: Were you far from town?

Onstad: About a mile and a half. We walked to school. Yes, we walked to school. Snow banks everywhere. When the snowplow would come out and plow the driveway, well, by the end of the winter the snow banks were up over our heads on the sides of the roads. But as a child I didn't mind it. One reason I left Minnesota was when you have to go to work, [you'd have to] thaw your windshields out and those kind of things, then you migrate away from the cold climates. But as a child we had fun. Ice skating and sledding.

Swent: Was this is a Scandinavian community?

Onstad: No. Well, partly. Minnesota is basically German, Scandinavian.

Swent: Onstad sounds Scandinavian.

Onstad: Onstad is Norwegian. A "t" at the end there, would make it German. But my side of the family is German. My maiden name was Shingledecker.

Swent: Oh, that's pretty German!

Onstad: That's pretty German. They used to use my name when they'd make up a form in school; they'd say, "We're gonna use your name as a sample because you have thirteen letters in your name, and if your name fits in there, anybody's will." So I think that's one of the reasons I married someone with a short name. I got tired of writing that long name.

My mother always had a big garden. She did canning, baking, sewing. She sewed all our clothing. There was very few things that we ever bought. Of course, when we were children we thought we were neglected because she sewed all the clothing and my sisters--I have two sisters older than I am, and then my older brother--so I'd get all the hand-me-down clothing. If my sister outgrew a dress, my mother would just alter it to fit me. It wasn't until I left home that I ever had new clothing. So we thought it was terrible. Just mistreated, you know? And it's not until you're older when you look back on that and you think how grateful you were. We were so healthy. I think probably the best

gift my parents ever gave me was health. The atmosphere of living in the country with good food.

Swent: And clean air and clean water.

Onstad: And clean air and clean water, right. We didn't have a lot of material things, but we had the important things. It was quite a close family. Even when we left home, we'd still come back frequently. Except for my brother. Now, once he left home, he was more of a city boy, I think. He didn't really like country.

Swent: So what made you leave?

Onstad: Money. [laughing] I graduated from high school in 1956.

Working for an Insurance Company in Minneapolis, Late 1950s

Swent: Did you take secretarial courses?

Onstad: I took secretarial courses, yes. And I remember going down to Minneapolis on Easter vacation, which was some time in April, I guess. My sisters, both, had already left home and they were working in Minneapolis, so I went to stay with my sister and I found a job: North American Life and Casualty Company, an insurance company. And they agreed to hold the job for me until I graduated in June, so I graduated on a Friday, and Sunday I get on the Greyhound bus and I leave for Minneapolis. And I remember my mother saying, "Well, why don't you stay home for the summer? I mean, you just got out of school."

I said, "Oh, no! I have my job all lined up. I'm leaving!" Because I wanted to buy new clothes, and I wanted to go on trips, and couldn't wait to start buying new things.

So that was it: I started working on Monday morning at the insurance company. I stayed there for about four years. I got a paycheck, [and I'd] go down and buy three new outfits. You know, everything matched: shoes and purse and hats. We had hats in those days, with gloves and everything. Everything matched. And it was just--

Swent: Where did you live?

Onstad: I lived in downtown.

Swent: In an apartment?

Onstad: Yes, it was an apartment. Well, actually, there were seven girls. There would be, like, two girls in a room. I think there were six bedrooms and then we shared a big dining room, living room. So you had companionship of other people.

Then after a few years, I thought, "I want to go back home. It's Friday night," and get on the Greyhound bus. I didn't have a car then, so I'd go back home to the farm on the weekends, and Sunday night go back to the city. Did that for three or four years. That's probably the first time I realized that I really liked it in the country, though. I liked earning money and I liked the independence, but I also liked being on the farm, so I sort of traveled back and forth that way.

That's where I met my husband, Randy [Randolph], in Minneapolis. He was a machinist, and he was about seven years older than me. And at that time, that's a big difference.

Swent: Yes, it is. He was an "older man".

Onstad: Yes, he was an old man then, huh? And we dated, then, in Minneapolis and got engaged.

Swent: What did you do for dating?

Onstad: Movies. At that time they had ballroom dancing. Bands like the big bands.

Swent: When was this?

Onstad: This was almost 1960--'56 to '59. That's when Elvis was in. And movies. And dancing. Dancing, I guess, probably was the big thing. I did a lot of ice skating. Where I worked there in the insurance company, right across the road, was a park that had a big pond in it. I'd take my ice skates to work, change clothes, and go over and ice skate for an hour and then go home. I was just learning to do the twirls and all those fancy things. I haven't skated since.

I had a brother in Miami. He was living in Miami, Florida. He'd lived there for a number of years, so I saved money then when I was working at the insurance company and took a Greyhound bus to visit my brother. Kind of liked Miami.

Swent: In the winter?

Onstad: I don't remember whether it was winter or not, but that was fun. And then I got to talking to my husband about Miami, and he said, "Let's go. I don't like working in this--getting up, shoveling

the car out in the morning. Let's go to Miami." So we did. We almost starved to death. There was no employment hardly, and the jobs that were there were low-paying. It was definitely a tourist area.

Swent: When was this?

Onstad: This was in 1960. Yes, early '60. Probably the last part of 1959, 1960. We only stayed there a few months, and he started telling me about California.

Swent: Had he been there?

Onstad: He'd been in California because he'd been at Hamilton Air Force Base in Marin County. He said, "California is a pretty nice place, and I have a friend out there in Mountain View, California. Let's go to California. I'll look up my friend, and let's look around and see what employment is there."

And we drove across the southern part of the United States: Louisiana and Mississippi and Arizona and Texas. Texas is where I learned to drive--illegally. There was nothing but flat roads, you know? So I said, "Let me drive." So I actually learned to drive coming across Texas.

Swent: You had not driven a car then?

Onstad: I had never driven a car before. I used to drive tractors and all the machinery at home, but my mother never drove a car, and my father was not the type that's going to teach you to drive. He wouldn't have the patience for it. He was pretty stern. If the answer was, "No," you didn't question it.

Swent: But you had driven tractors.

Onstad: But I had driven tractors. Well, I guess at the time I was working I thought it was more important to buy clothes than a car, and in Minneapolis the city buses ran every ten minutes, so there really wasn't the need for a car. So I learned to drive in Texas, on those flat roads, middle of nowhere.

Working and Saving Money, Mountain View, California

Onstad: We ended up in Mountain View and rented a little apartment there. Looked up his friend. He started working for Lockheed and I got a job in another engineering firm, Palo Alto Engineering. I did a

little switchboard work. I used to relieve the switchboard operator. And I was actually mostly doing typing at the engineering company.

Swent: What were you paid in those days, at the beginning?

Onstad: I remember at the insurance company I made \$40 a week. I'll never forget that. \$40 a week.

Swent: And what kind of benefits? Any benefits?

Onstad: We had benefits, yes. I don't remember what they were.

Swent: But you did have some.

Onstad: Oh, yes.

Swent: \$40 a week. And you were paying how much for your apartment?

Onstad: For rent? I shared with the other girls. It seems like we were paying nine dollars a week or nine dollars a month for the room. It wasn't expensive. But everything is relation to salaries.

Swent: But it's interesting to get that. So on forty dollars a week you were buying clothes and going to movies.

Onstad: And paying rent. Saved up money to go on a vacation. I did take one trip to Colorado on a dude ranch--one of the other girls and I. That was quite an experience, because we got off the airplane, and they picked us up by van to take us out to the dude ranch, and our luggage got lost. There we were in high heels. They had to take us all the way into Denver so we could go shopping and buy some clothing! I think it was two or three or four days later our luggage arrived.

But, yes. I often think back. It seemed like we had money to spend. So I guess the rent was in relation to what the salaries were.

Swent: So what were you paid at Palo Alto Engineering? Do you remember that?

Onstad: I don't recall what it was. Well, once we came to California, the salaries were--I mean, we were shocked at how good the salaries were compared to Minnesota. This really seemed like, "Wow! We're gonna be making money now!" Our rent was probably \$100 a month. We rented a little apartment. But we were very conservative. I started baking bread. Well, my mother always baked bread, so I was baking bread. I wasn't that good at it. I remember making

sandwiches for our lunch and they'd fall on the table, until I got better at making bread.

And we saved a lot of money. We put money away. I guess it was because both of us came from a family that didn't have a lot of money, so we became kind of conservative. At least, when I met my husband I think he was probably more conservative than I am, and I picked up some good traits there. We saved enough money in, I believe it was about a year and a half. We put a down payment on a duplex in Mountain View. We paid \$16,000 for that duplex, and that was in 1961.

Swent: So you got into the property management business.

Onstad: This was an old Spanish style duplex. Well, it was actually like a pair of flats. It was upper and lower units. And I remember the bottom unit. There were people living in the bottom half. They were paying sixty-seven dollars a month rent. So we lived in the upper half. It was really neat. It had a nice little balcony out in the front. It was all Spanish. But it was old. And, gee, I guess over ten years we remodeled it.

Swent: Did you do a lot of it yourself?

Onstad: He did everything himself. Everything. He's really handy in all different--plumbing, carpentry. He built a double garage and put a balcony on the top of the garage, and it was kind of architectural. These lines in it. He really is very capable with his hands. And being a machinist, he's used to working that way.

But to backtrack a little bit, though, we then went to Reno, Nevada, and got married. And I got pregnant with my daughter, and she was born in January of 1961. Just prior to when she was born was when we bought the duplex. And he worked swing shift at Lockheed. And then he went over to Hewlett-Packard, and he worked swing shift from 3 to 11 at night. All the while the children grew up, he was working swing.

Children: Rachel and Aaron; Childcare and Private Schools

Swent: How many children do you have, Marion?

Onstad: I have a son.

Swent: A daughter and a son.

Onstad: My daughter's name is Rachel.

Swent: And Aaron?

Onstad: And Aaron. He was born in 1965. I was working days. I started working--well, I went back to work when Rachel was three months old. I've always worked, it seems like. I graduated on Friday, started working on Monday. Rachel was born, I stayed home for three months, and I went to work for--it used to be called Philco, the old Philco, refrigerators and things. But they sold out to Ford Aerospace. I stayed with them for nineteen years. I was doing secretarial work there.

Swent: How did you manage childcare?

Onstad: I had a neighbor. I had more than one babysitter, but there was always somebody in the area. I often think back. They probably had daycare centers or pre-schools, but--now my grandchildren are going to daycares and pre-schools, and I don't remember daycares then. I don't think it was as popular as just having a babysitter.

Swent: It wasn't a formalized thing, I think. They didn't have licenses and all that.

Onstad: Yes, that's it. So I always was fortunate to find someone right a few blocks from the house.

Swent: You dropped the children off there?

Onstad: Yes. I always took them to someone's house. Which I feel--boy, if I had to do it over again, I would have stayed home with them. My daughter has been able to stay home with her children, and I think that's the best way.

Swent: Do you?

Onstad: I think it's better to be with your own family. That way you can teach them what you want. You can formulate their early years yourself, which is so critical. The first five years, I think, of a child's life are the most formative years.

Swent: Do you feel that the people that cared for your children gave them different ideas than you would have?

Onstad: Well, maybe not necessarily that, but, you know, everybody has their own way of raising children, and I think if you're able to do it yourself, that's the best way. But he worked night and swing shift, and I worked days all those years, and the children

went to private schools. They had the Harker Day School. That was in Palo Alto. Half of it was like a military academy, and then they had the co-ed Harker School. So Aaron went to the military part of it, and Rachel went to the co-ed.

Swent: Why did you choose that?

Onstad: My husband and I both wanted the best education we could give them and didn't feel that maybe the public schools would give them the best education. So the bus would come by, pick them up, take them off to school. He had a little military uniform. He's small, a small build. He was in the first grade then. We couldn't find a uniform to fit him. They had their standard uniforms for the school and we had to get it altered. I mean, we had to take this much [demonstrating] off the legs. He really looked cute. And then she had her uniform. So they went to the Harker School for a number of years. And then Harker sold the military part of the school, and they moved the Harker Day School to San Jose. And for a while they took the bus to San Jose. That was a long ride for young children. Well, Rachel continued with them. She graduated from eighth grade from Harker.

About that time, we moved to Palo Alto. And there was another private school called Keys School.

We switched Aaron over to the Keys School, and Rachel continued at Harker. Aaron stayed there through sixth grade, and then there was another school just adjoining there, a junior high school--Hoover School, I think, run by the Hoovers. Rachel graduated from Harker and started at Castilleja School for Girls. That was in Palo Alto, too. So all this time they were going to private schools.

Hosting Exchange Students from Belgium and Germany

Onstad: And then we had exchange students. Rachel was taking French all through school, and I heard about the exchange program.

Swent: Which program was it? AFS?

Onstad: I think it was the AFS, yes.

Swent: American Field Service.

Onstad: I believe that was it. It sounds familiar. I don't remember which it was, now. I asked for a girl from France. I thought this would be fun for Rachel. She could speak the language. Well, they said they didn't have any more students. French students, I guess, were pretty popular. But she said, "I have a girl from Belgium that speaks French," because half of the country speaks French and half speaks Flemish. Well, she was Flemish, but she did speak French. Her name was Nadine Noens. Nadine came to stay with us, then, when she was eighteen and my daughter was sixteen. She graduated from high school at age sixteen.

And then we had another exchange student from Germany. Her name was Bebe Branss. Her father had a television program in Germany. So that's when both of these girls--that was a really great time in our life. I sometimes think we got more out of it than they did, although I took them everywhere. We visited every place in the state that we could think of--you know, the state parks and Disneyland. We took them everywhere. The idea was for them to learn English. They could speak English, but they were basically not to speak in their own language. The idea for them was to gain more English. Now, we cheated a little bit, and we also learned their language.

And then Nadine Noens' family asked if Rachel could come and stay with them after she graduated. She was only sixteen, and we said, "Gee, do it. When you come back, you can start college and still be young, the age most children are when they graduate." So she went, then, to stay with Bebe. She didn't really know German. She knew a lot of French, but when she first went to Germany, the Branss family sent her to language school for about six weeks. Crash course. I don't know how many hours they went during the day. It was, like, with earphones. And in six weeks, then, she learned enough German to start high school. Because in Germany they go to school fourteen years, where our students go twelve. So I think their last two years are probably equal to our junior college here.

Swent: I think so, yes.

Onstad: So she went to high school there, and I guess that was quite a shock for her because she had never even been away from home, either, and to be in a room with everybody speaking another language, I guess it took a month or so. She kind of sat there and wondered what's going on. And then all of a sudden it clicked. And by the time the end of the year came, she was in drama class and really enjoying this. It was a wonderful year for her.

Swent: A wonderful experience.

Onstad: Yes, a wonderful experience. I think at first she wondered what she was doing there, but later on she realized the value of it. And then she came back and started going to San Jose State, and she also then was working at Ford Aerospace, where I was. They had a nice program there. She hired in as a security guard, because on the night shifts they could do their homework, so she did a lot of her college work while working as a guard, too.

In fact, her husband now also worked there. They weren't really dating then, but he was on the security force, too, and going to school. They were both going to San Jose State and both working as security guards, although they didn't really date until later in life. And her husband, Kevin--my son-in-law's father also worked at Ford Aerospace. So it's interesting that both of their parents worked there, and they worked there.

Swent: Had you sold your duplex?

Onstad: Yes. We had sold the duplex and bought a house in Palo Alto. And then in 1980, in August, I decided I was going to leave Ford Aerospace. Now, we had bought the ranch up here.

Swent: You had already bought it.

Onstad: We bought the ranch about 1964, some time in there.

Buying Part of the Chandon Ranch on Morgan Valley Road, 1964

Swent: How did you happen to do that?

Onstad: A friend of mine--

##

Onstad: A friend of mine who worked with me at Ford Aerospace wanted to buy property up here. It was a 60-acre parcel. They didn't want to buy the whole thing, so they wanted to take in a couple of partners to split up that sixty acres. So we came up here and looked at it with them.

Swent: It was here on Morgan Valley Road?

Onstad: Yes, where we have the ranch now. We bought forty-five acres, and the other party--his name was Leo Lysenko. He was from the Ukraine. He bought the balance of the property.

Swent: So he ended up only buying fifteen.

Onstad: Right. Then, several years later, Leo Lysenko sold his part of the property. He sold it to a lady who now works at the post office in Lower Lake. Her name was Miller. He sold his fifteen acres to Mrs. Miller, and then Mrs. Miller decided to sell the property, and we bought it from her, so we ended up with sixty acres. Now, there were many little parcels here in this area. It was sort of like Monopoly. We'd pick up a five that became available or a ten over here. And so we ended up with 100 acres-- 101 acres--just by picking up additional parcels.

Swent: What sort of purchase arrangement did you make? Did you buy them outright? Pay cash? Or contracts?

Onstad: The forty-five was on a contract. One ten-acre parcel was for sale at the county courthouse. Not a foreclosure but--gee, I should have looked this up before you came. It was similar to a foreclosure. And we bought that one outright. You had to have cash. That was a ten-acre parcel. Then we bought, for cash, another five-acre parcel. And then another five-acre parcel.

Swent: What sort of prices? How much was an acre at this time?

Onstad: When we bought the forty-five acres, it was, like, \$250 an acre.

Swent: This was in '64?

Onstad: This was around 1964. The ten acres that we bought at the courthouse, I believe we paid four thousand dollars \$4,000 for it.

Swent: \$400 an acre?

Onstad: Yes, that sounds about right.

Swent: A lot higher.

Onstad: Yes. And then we bought two other five-acre parcels. I don't recall what the prices were, but higher because it was a few years later.

Swent: And this is grazing land.

Onstad: Yes. It was just undeveloped property. All this was undeveloped. There were big ranches here in the area where we bought. It was called the old Chandon Ranch. It was about 500 and some acres. The Chandon Ranch was split up by two developers, and that's how we happen to have so many five and ten and twenty-acre parcels here. It was all split up. One partner wanted to leave it total

and make it into a hunting reserve for ducks, like a wetlands. And the other partner wanted to split it up into small pieces. And I guess they had a falling out, and it ended up that the other partner did split it up.

Swent: These would be for home sites? Vacation homes?

Onstad: Yes. Most of the people bought it and would come up weekends. We used to come up weekends then, until 1980, when we moved up here. My children were small then. Let's see, Aaron and Rachel are four and a half years apart. Aaron was probably about two years old, because I remember we had an old Mercedes. We'd come up here, and we'd camp out on the weekends. I remember making him a bed in the back window. He was so small and [laughing] he'd sleep in the back window of the Mercedes.

Then we'd come up the Knoxville-Berryessa Road, and they have all these low-water crossings that they just poured the cement across, you know? Well, they're still there, except a couple of them washed out last winter. But we always came up that way. And the kids would say, "Daddy! Roll down the windows and go fast." It would spray. You had to be careful because the brakes would go out. They'd stick their hands out the window, and they loved those crossings. I've often thought that I've never taken pictures of those crossings, but one day they won't be there. And I really need to do that. Already two of them have washed out now.

And we'd stop near Fairfield. There's an old truck stop there. It's just off of Highway 121. There's an old truck stop, and we'd stop in there and have lunch. Every time we'd come up, we'd stop there. The kids would order spaghetti. They always remember that. I mean, these huge plates of spaghetti, and they were little kids and they always were amazed they could eat it all. But it became kind of a tradition: stop at the truck stop, and go through the crossings on the way up to the ranch. So we did that for years.

Like the Wild West, Cattle Rustling and All

Swent: Was there a house on the ranch? Any structure?

Onstad: Nothing on the ranch, no. It was all open country here. There were no fences or anything. Other people were grazing up here and there were cattle running everywhere. It was the McIntyre Ranch,

and that's where the tailings dam is now. That was a 1600-acre ranch.

Swent: What did you anticipate for this ranch? What were your plans?

Onstad: Well, we did buy a few head of cattle, and we ended up--we fenced the property off because otherwise all the cattle would be coming in and we wanted to contain ours, so we had to fence the ranch. At that time, I don't think we really anticipated living on it. But it was kind of a weekend retreat, and it was sort of, for my husband and myself, a reflection of going back to the country, I suppose.

He also lived in a small town in Minnesota, almost to the Canadian border: a town called Macintosh, way up north in Minnesota. And he liked farming.

At that time it was just a place to go on weekends.

Swent: What kind of fence did you put in?

Onstad: We put barbed wire fences.

Swent: Did you need any sort of permission to do that?

Onstad: No. Everything was open then. We just put up the fences because we didn't want our cattle roaming or other people's cattle coming in.

Swent: What kind of posts?

Onstad: Steel posts and wooden posts. Every once in a while you have to put these green, treated posts. It was kind of the Wild West out here. There was grazing going on, and the people that were grazing grazed everywhere, so it was kind of like they didn't like the idea of people coming in and fencing off small pieces because that would cut down on their graze, so we had a lot of problems back in those days with cattle rustling. There were actually people shooting at each other. It was really--I often think about it--like the Wild West here. We would find our cattle fences cut. There were a couple of people running cattle here that didn't stop at anything. I mean, they'd cut fences and take your cattle and rebrand them and, oh gosh, it was quite a--that kind of activity here.

Besides that McIntyre Ranch there was the McCosker Ranch. It was another 500 and something-acre ranch. And then ours was the Chandon Ranch, so there were big ranches here. The owners weren't living here, but they would lease them out for grazing.

And the people that were grazing weren't always here, but when they were, they were always looking at other cattle. [laughs]

Swent: Where did you buy your cattle?

Onstad: We'd buy them at auction barns. There was one in Orelan; there was one in Ukiah. Those were the closest ones. And we'd go to the auction barns and buy cattle.

Swent: And you branded them?

Onstad: Branded them.

Swent: Did you have to register a brand?

Onstad: Yes, right. We still do. Our brand is the Circle R, an R with a circle around it. On the left shoulder. So that went on, then. We'd come up weekends. And then in--

Swent: Excuse me. Did you lose cattle some time?

Onstad: Yes. We lost cattle. And I do remember going to the sheriff more than once because we suspected where our cattle were. In fact, we even saw some in a corral area, and when we went down by horseback down Rieff Road to try to get our cattle back. This man that owned the ranch there would be pointing a gun at you: "You're not coming on my property." We suspected that's where our cattle were taken and reported to the sheriff.

They didn't really want to get involved: "Do you have pictures?" You know, "Do you have pictures of them moving your cattle?"

It was kind of a, "I know you have 'em, but what can I do about it?" type arrangement.

One of the fellows also lived in the Capay Valley, and he was a butcher. And they had heard from other people that he had a walk-in cooler. I think they were butchered and the meat was sold--hides, whatever. Destroyed, anyhow.

So that went on. A number of people lost cattle here, smaller people like ourselves that were new to the area.

Swent: But they never took them all.

Onstad: Oh, no.

Swent: Just a few.

Onstad: They'd generally take the younger ones and the calves.

Swent: So you had horses as well.

Onstad: We didn't have the horses up here at that time. We boarded horses in the Bay Area. We had two horses that we boarded. My daughter was into riding quite a bit then. We had a white Appaloosa. She took him in to horse shows. I got into riding, too. I'd go out to the stable and did a lot of riding.

Swent: When you say you boarded them, you mean you owned them and--

Onstad: Paid rent for them at a local stable. And we had a little Shetland pony.

Swent: So would you trailer them up here, then?

Onstad: No, we never really brought them up here. We just boarded them there. I think a couple of years before we moved here, we finally did bring the horses up.

Swent: You mentioned riding horses.

Onstad: Oh, yes. Well, neighbors had horses, too. Yes, we did ride horses then. It was the latter part before we moved here.

1980: Leaving Ford Aerospace to Live Quietly in the Country

Onstad: August 1, 1980, then, I quit my job at Ford Aerospace. And lo and behold, I didn't know it but as I was checking out of the job, that's when they first announced this gold strike in the San Francisco Examiner--Examiner or Chronicle--I'm not sure which one it was. A security guard showed me it. It was a little square here, and it was talking that a square represented where the three counties came together here. And he said, "Well, isn't this near your property up there?"

And I said, "Oh, my gosh, yes. I know where that Manhattan mercury mine is, yes. We pass there all the time." We knew Bill Wilder.

And he said, "Well, they've discovered gold there."

And I said, "Oh, yes. That's just not far from our ranch."

Swent: Had you heard anything before then?

Onstad: No, no.

Swent: Seen any of the activity?

Onstad: No. Well, I shouldn't say no because Bill Wilder came over for dinner at my neighbors'. And there were three or four of the neighbors, were all together having dinner, and--

Swent: Who were some of the other neighbors?

Onstad: Mitch Zujovich, who is from Yugoslavia. He has a neighboring ranch to us. He was hosting the dinner. And the Wilders were there, I believe the Landmans were there, and ourselves. And Bill Wilder--I remember him talking about Homestake geologists because he gave them a lease back in 1978 and '79 to explore. Well, I didn't know this until he was talking about it. He said, "Homestake geologists are looking around on my property. They think there's gold here." And he said, "There isn't any gold here. I don't know what it is they're looking for." But lo and behold, for his benefit, they found it, and it was great. They explored here for a year and a half on his property.

Swent: But you didn't know anything about it?

Onstad: No, I wasn't aware of it at the time, until he had mentioned Homestake.

Swent: Were you still coming in on the Berryessa Road by that time?

Onstad: Yes. We always came up through Lake Berryessa. We never came up the other way. Oh, that road going up to Lower Lake was just a little, narrow gravel road. It took you about thirty-five minutes to get here from Lower Lake, so we always came up the back way. Again, I think it's the country in us because we liked coming that way. It was a nice Sunday afternoon type drive.

Swent: But you weren't aware of extra traffic.

Onstad: I don't think there was that much traffic then. You'd have just maybe boats or campers coming up.

Swent: I was thinking of the geologists coming up.

Onstad: Oh, no. I don't think there was that much traffic then.

Swent: The samplers. The sampling that they were doing.

Onstad: No, that would be 1978. That was like two years before we actually moved up here. I knew nothing about the gold strike

until the very day I was checking out of my job and a security guard showed it to me in the paper. And I said, "Oh, my gosh." Well, I said, "I know there was a mercury mine there, but I never realized they had found gold." I said, "Well, it's too late now. I already quit my job. I'm moving up anyway!" [laughing]

And so my son and I came up here first. My husband stayed. We put the house on the market, and it sold in about two weekends. He stayed and worked at Hewlett-Packard a little bit longer, but I wanted to move up here then at the end of August because school was starting in September and he was going to start high school here. He started ninth grade. He went then from ninth to twelfth grade here in Lower Lake.

We didn't have any buildings on the ranch, so we lived at Trombetta's Resort in Clearlake. He and I would drive out to the ranch once in a while because it was about a forty-five-minute drive out here, but we were actually living in Clearlake. We did that 'til March of '81. So from August of '80 to March of '81 we lived in Clearlake. And then my husband quit his job, and we bought an Airstream travel trailer and parked it on the ranch, and we had cattle up here then, and some chickens, and I had a big garden going. We actually moved on the ranch then in '81.

And my son wasn't old enough for a license yet, so I was driving him back and forth. The school bus came part-way out. I don't know if you've noticed, there's like a Christmas tree farm?

Swent: Yes.

Onstad: It's called the Baker Mine in there?

Swent: Yes.

Onstad: The bus would come out that far.

Swent: It's about ten miles?

Onstad: It's about six miles out there from town. They would come that far and they'd wait there at the Baker Mine, so I would take Aaron in. And we had another neighbor--the Simpsons: Paul and Janet Simpson--and they had two school children, too, so I'd stop and pick up their children and take them another mile down the hill and to the bus, and then go back and pick them up again. And the road was--oh, in the wintertime--that was the worst winter they ever had here. And Aaron and I were alone. [chuckling]

It was 22 degrees. The snow stayed for about a week. I remember waiting for the snow plow so I could get him out to get

him to school. They never had such a winter. I used to talk to Jack Landman because he'd been here. He grew up here. And he said, "That's the worst winter we've had in fifteen years." And I said, "Boy, that's the winter we move up." But I took him back and forth to school until he was old enough to get his own car, and then he drove to school himself. And I used to worry about him, oh, getting off the road.

So that was 1981. And in 1983 Davy McKee Engineers came here, and they had a trailer parked up where the pit is now. And Homestake had a trailer next to them. And Janet Simpson, the lady I was talking about, started working for Homestake as a secretary. Well, one day she came knocking at my trailer. She said, "You know, they're looking for a secretary to work for Davy McKee. Why don't you apply?"

And I said, "Oh, Janet, I didn't really move up here to go back to work. After nineteen years there at Ford Aerospace, I think--you know, my garden--and I don't know if I want to go back to work."

She said, "It's just a temporary job, about a year and a half, they think, or a couple of years, to build the mine."

1983, Secretary for Davy McKee: Phone, Typewriter, and Flyswatter

Onstad: So I thought about it, and I dug out a resume. And I thought, "Well, maybe a temporary job will be okay." So I took my resume up to the trailer and I talked to Bob Sinclair. Bob Sinclair was the construction manager.

Swent: For Davy.

Onstad: For Davy--Davy McKee and Klaus Thiel. You know Klaus.

Swent: I've talked to him on the phone, but I've never really met him.

Onstad: Okay. Klaus Thiel. And he was the project manager, so he was really in charge. He was project manager, and then Bob Sinclair reported to him as the construction manager. Well, I interviewed with Bob Sinclair. And since I'd been doing secretarial work for a number of years and I lived so close, they hired me.

Swent: They were probably thrilled to death to have you here.

Onstad: I guess they never dreamed there was a secretary right out here in the middle of a cow pasture, you know?

The old Morgan Valley Road went way to where the tailings is now. It's not where it is right now. So I'd walk across the pasture here and Bob Sinclair would pick me up at the end of the road and give me a ride up to the mine.

I'll never forget the first day on the job. I walked in this trailer, and there was a desk and a telephone and a typewriter.

Swent: There was a phone.

Onstad: Well, they had a microwave. The telephone was a microwave system. They had the phone and a typewriter, and that was it--and a fly swatter. [laughter]

He said, "Well, you know you're in the middle of a cow pasture out here, and this is probably going to be the best tool you ever had." I'll never forget that the fly swatter was lying on the desk. No pencils, no paper, no supplies. He said, "Now, figure out what it is you need, and we'll order it." I was the only girl there. I mean, there were maybe half a dozen people working for the company then in this one little trailer. There was one blue room the hourly workers would use. I remember Bob Sinclair said, "You don't want to use that blue room. We're gonna get you your own!" So he ordered me my own private blue room.

Swent: Janet was in the next--

Onstad: Yes, Janet was the other secretary in the Homestake trailer, so we would have lunch together.

Swent: But you didn't have the same facilities.

Onstad: No. I don't know if they had any more rest rooms there. I think she had her own blue room. I don't know. Bob Sinclair said, "Well, this is your own now. You don't have to use the one that the men are using." That was fine, except someone put a combination lock on this one so the guys don't use it. Well, that was embarrassing. You'd stand out there trying to do the combination, and people watching you. I said, "Oh, you're really sweet, and I appreciate the consideration, but just take the combination off. If they use it, that's okay." [chuckling] It was bad enough just to go out to the blue room, but to stand there with the combination... So I had them take the combination lock off my blue room. But they were very considerate.

Now, he had an English accent because he was from South Africa. I took dictation. They had meetings and meetings. Like, every day, almost, they'd have a meeting, and then he would dictate the minutes of the meeting to me. So I did a lot, a lot of typing. A lot of shorthand and a lot of typing.

Swent: When did you start with them? What was the date?

Onstad: It was in the fall of 1983.

Swent: I think they got the contract in the summer of '82.

Onstad: Well, it was '83, though, when I started.

Swent: I may be wrong in that.

Onstad: Maybe they got the contract in '82.

Swent: It took them a while to get set up there, I guess.

Onstad: Sure.

Swent: Yes, the contract was given to Davy in June of '82, but then, of course, they were working down at San Ramon. They moved from San Ramon, then.

Onstad: Sure. They built the model and--

Swent: Did you go down there at all?

Onstad: No, no, I've never been down there. Just here. So then I remember it was the fall of '83 because I had just finished canning my tomatoes, and I thought, "Well, I'll hurry up and can my tomatoes because once I start working I won't have time." So then, a few months after I worked up there in the trailer, then they put in seven trailers all hooked together. A big office. Seven construction trailers right where the guard post is now. Right behind there they had the trailers. So then Bob Sinclair drove me over to the meadow and he said, "Here. I want to show you where your new office is going to be."

Construction: A Lot of Excitement, a Lot of Action

Swent: Right down here, where the guard post is now.

Onstad: Yes, right there, where the environmental trailer is, right in that area there. So that's where I worked for the balance of the time, with Davy. It was interesting. Klaus Thiel was from Germany. We used to call him the Gestapo. He was kind of a stocky, short guy, and he'd walk in and I said, [whispering] "Here comes the Gestapo." [chuckling] He'd dictate with a German accent, and I just did a lot of typing. For a while then I was the only girl there. And then they hired a receptionist, then they hired a girl in accounting, and personnel, and they started growing; we had more and more people. There were people from Peru, Russia, Taiwan, Mexico--all over the world. It was interesting.

Swent: Exciting.

Onstad: It was--a lot of excitement, a lot of action going on. Then next to the Davy McKee trailer was another Homestake trailer. Kathi Merola was actually the Homestake liaison. It was the liaison trailer between Davy McKee and Homestake. Jack Thompson was the general manager then. It was kind of a liaison between them.

Bill Humphrey? Do you know him? Bill Humphrey used to come up frequently. We always thought he was the greatest, because he'd go down the hall and always call everybody by name. Very people-oriented. And Roy Cellan. He was Homestake's representative.

Swent: He was a metallurgist, I think.

Onstad: Yes, I believe so. He spent a lot of time here. But it was just a lot of action.

Swent: Were you aware of any points of difference between the two companies, between Davy and Homestake? Were there times that they were working at cross purposes?

Onstad: Well, they had the regular meetings--you know, management meetings. I think Davy McKee may have been accused a few times of overspending. They did their share of spending. You know, it cost \$280 million before they ever poured the first gold bar here. But they got the job done quickly. They actually completed the mine in eighteen months ahead of schedule, which meant bonuses.

Swent: I know that they fast-tracked it, and I'm not really sure what difference that makes. Were you aware of any--

Onstad: Fast-tracked it? Is that what they called it?

- Swent: Yes, they said that they did it on a fast-track schedule, and I don't know what difference that would make to you, for instance.
- Onstad: Well, they just completed it ahead of time. I don't think the fast track had any bearing on any lack of expertise or slipshod...
- Swent: I just wondered whether you were aware of any of those kinds of decisions that were being made.
- Onstad: No, I don't think I am. But I remember them because they finished early, so they paid bonuses. After I actually transferred up here to Homestake and when Davy McKee went home, I remember getting a bonus because I had spent enough time here. Davy McKee. They paid me with a bonus, too. If you're going to ask me how much it was, I don't even remember.
- Swent: Oh, that's okay.
- Onstad: I can't remember now.
- Swent: Let's go back to the Davy McKee company. You, of course, had not worked for a construction company before.
- Onstad: No, I'd never worked for construction before. And probably there's just so much activity with the trucks and grading and equipment coming in. And the fact that I lived so close, it had a little bit of bearing on me, too. That probably made it more interesting for me.
- Swent: Any particular crises that you remember?
- Onstad: I remember walking to work, rain or shine. I lived that close. I just walked to work.
- Swent: But I was wondering about times when things didn't come that were supposed to or--
- Onstad: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. I remember the purchasing agent--talk about a stressful job--getting materials in here in a timely fashion so that they could complete the mine.

Building the Road and Bringing in the Autoclave

- Onstad: The autoclave was one story in itself. You know, there were three of them. The autoclave was patented here. That's what made the McLaughlin Mine unique. Autoclaves were used in doctors' offices,

for sterilizing instruments. That's not new, but for mining it was new. They patented it here, and there were three of them. They were forged in one piece in Germany, of steel. And then they went over to the Netherlands, and they put a lead lining inside of them. Then they went to the port of Sacramento. Well, now this was a challenge, getting these 400,000-pound autoclaves [via] Highway 5, 20, 53, and then out Morgan Valley Road.

Well, first of all, they had to construct the road. I told you it was just a narrow road there. Graveled. Well, now they had to pave it, widen it, and they brought PG&E lines out here-- they still had the microwave telephone then--to prepare to bring in the autoclaves. And the oxygen plant was huge. They wouldn't have been able to make those corners, so the road came first. That was an eighteen-mile road. It cost them a million dollars a mile to build.

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Onstad: Now we have the autoclaves sitting over in Sacramento, and we have the challenge of getting them here to the McLaughlin Mine.

Swent: When was this, do you remember?

Onstad: Well, this was the early part of construction, and I started working in the fall of '83, so it was either the last part of '83, maybe the first month or so of '84.

Swent: Not long after you started working here.

Onstad: Right. That was one of the first things they brought up. They put steel rigging around them. You had Caterpillar trucks pulling them, and Caterpillar trucks pushing. Well, it took them two weeks to bring those autoclaves in down Highway 20. It was the heaviest load that they'd ever had on California highways.

Swent: And people in the office were holding their breath?

Onstad: Oh, yes, yes. They were going eight miles an hour, so it took them two weeks to get here. Well, they almost didn't make that corner there where the traffic light is in Lower Lake. So they finally got the autoclaves up here, and then they had to put two layers of fire bricks inside them. They had German bricklayers here. They are special ceramic bricks that can take all this abrasive slurry and the heat and everything. So that was a challenge. That was probably one of the biggest challenges during construction, was bringing the autoclaves in. And being a new technology, you had to have expertise here to even set them up.

John Ransone. You probably know that name.

Swent: Yes.

Onstad: John Ransone was involved here during construction.

Swent: He was Homestake's project manager.

Onstad: That's right. And he was the liaison. And then bringing the oxygen plant up: that took even longer than the autoclaves--not as heavy, but long. So that's why the highway had to be done first.

Homestake's Attempt to Buy Neighboring Property

Swent: I understand that there were a lot of community meetings and some people were opposed to that highway.

Onstad: Yes.

Swent: Now, you were involved in that as a local rancher, weren't you?

Onstad: Yes. Homestake operated on a proactive basis. They had meetings.

Swent: When did they first get in touch with you as a rancher? Do you remember?

Onstad: Before I started working for Davy McKee, so sometime between '80 and '83. Ray Krauss. Jack Thompson never came out to the trailer. Mike Attaway was the mine manager. Mike came over several times. And Ray Krauss. Dennis Goldstein.

Swent: They actually came to visit, to call on you at your homes.

Onstad: Oh, yes. That trailer was bulging sometimes. We'd sit and have lunch or dinner and talk about what was going to happen here at the mine. They were very considerate of the fact that there were people living here already, which is a little bit different than most mines.

Swent: Who was the first caller you had? Do you remember?

Onstad: No, I don't, for sure. But Ray Krauss was probably one of the earlier ones that came by.

Swent: What did he talk to you about?

Onstad: Well, at first they approached, I believe, all the neighbors here. Like I said, there weren't many permanent things over here. They'd come up weekends to see if they wanted to sell. Mostly they were looking to buy properties as a buffer, or I think that they probably anticipated that people would have a problem with a mine coming in. And some people did sell. There were those neighbors that were wanting to sell their property and, you know, this is a pretty remote area, so when Homestake made them an offer, they were delighted to sell the property. There were a lot of properties that became Homestake property, and so there were fewer and fewer of us left.

Swent: Did you consider selling?

Onstad: They approached us about that, too. They wanted to buy our ranch. They wanted to buy everybody in the area. I never, I think from the beginning, ever had a fear about living next to the mine. Maybe I was just naive. I didn't know that much about mining, but I never had a fear of it. We didn't see the need to sell, and I am sure glad we didn't because it's been so positive.

We kind of had half a notion of opening up a summer camp for children here, in the beginning. We had a lot of dealings with young people, and we kind of had in the back of our mind we may open up a camp. And I still haven't forgotten that idea, although I think at my age now it would probably tax my energy too much at this point. But my children may consider that idea in the future.

There were neighbors that were very anti-mining. One of them is still living here. Do you want me to name names?

Anti-Mining Neighbors: Mostly Concerned About Pollution

Swent: Yes, I'd like names, if you don't mind.

Onstad: No. Mike Johnston was one. He has a home across the valley from me. He was a 1960 dissident-type college student. He's roughly-- I would guess his age to be early forties, maybe 45 now. He used to park his truck in the middle of the road, turn off the lights, and hope somebody would hit his truck. I mean, he was an activist.

Swent: I think he had some altercations with the buses bringing workers.

Onstad: Yes, yes. He was in physical confrontation with one of the bus drivers. He and another neighbor further down the road, Loren

Stolley. I know they attended the public hearings and caused quite a bit of disturbance. They were just definitely anti-mining. They were terrified that the water was going to be polluted and the air was going to be polluted, and they were going to do everything they could to prevent a mine from coming in. Other neighbors weren't that drastic about it, but they didn't like the idea.

Swent: Were neighbors pressuring you?

Onstad: No. We had never had neighbors pressuring us about it. Some didn't like the price that was being offered. They thought that the price on the open market would be better; if they did decide to sell, they probably could get a better price.

Swent: I wondered if there were conversations among the neighbors before these public meetings, or after, for that matter. In addition to the public meetings, there must have been over-the-fence conversations.

Onstad: Sure. Mostly pollution. Most people's concern was pollution.

Swent: A genuine fear, I suppose.

"The Highway and PG&E and Telephone a Real Asset for Us"

Onstad: Yes. I know at that time, during the time that Homestake was negotiating with neighbors, we did a land swap. We had some property where the new highway goes now--

Swent: Yes.

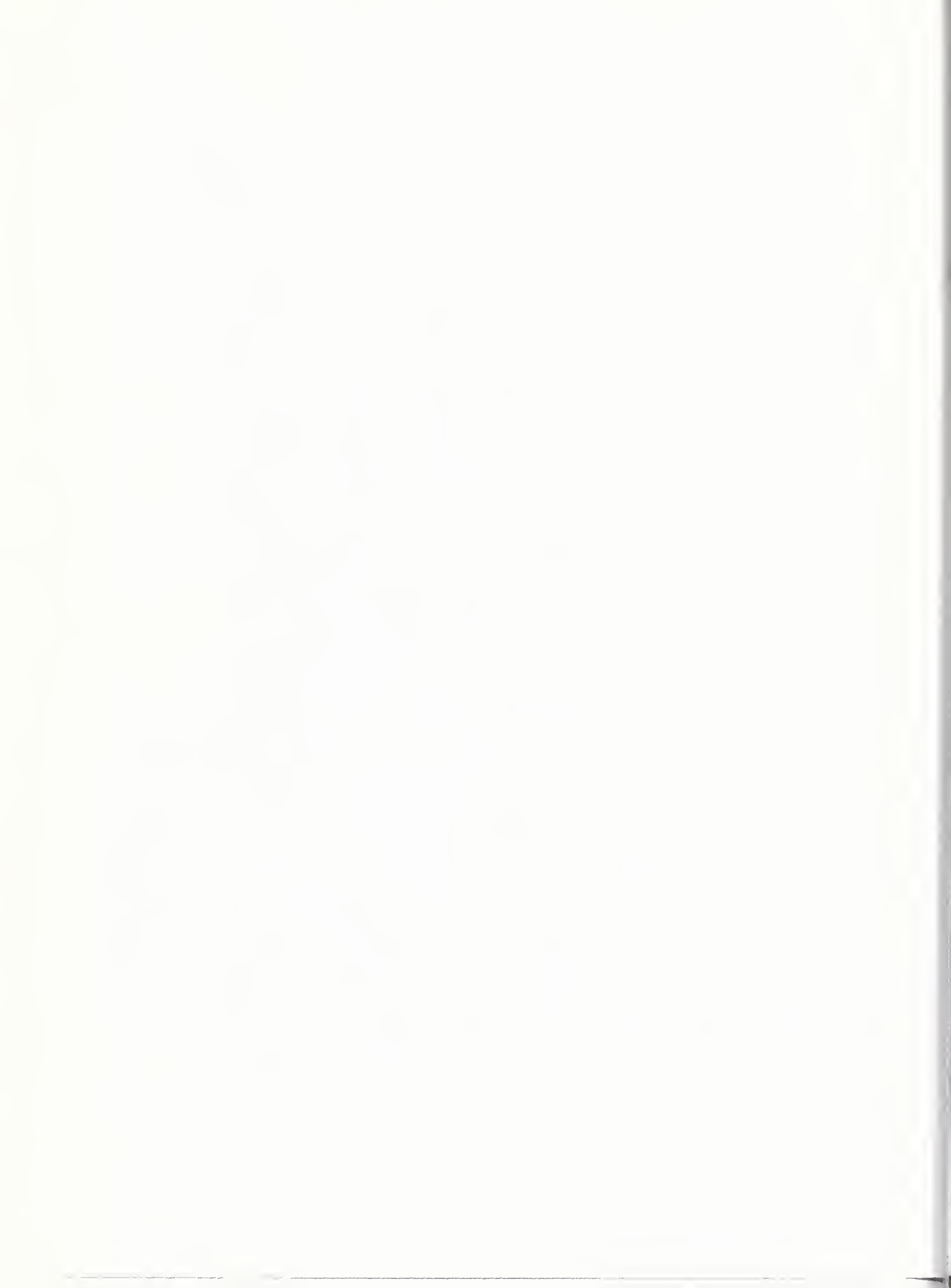
Onstad: It used to be part of our property. And we traded that portion of our property so the highway could go through there, so the highway could be on this side of Hunting Creek. Otherwise, they would have had to cross the creek.

Swent: You swapped with Homestake?

Onstad: And because of that, they gave us--we traded them five point some acres so the highway could cross the corner of our property, and they gave us six acres of woods, which is right behind our house now. We liked the idea of having that buffer of trees, and they needed the far corner that the creek used to cross our property. And they could keep the highway on this side of the creek, and it would give them control of the creek, too. They had to be



Morgan Valley Road and LLWD Water Pipelines, as shown in the Davy McKee McLaughlin Gold Project Historical Report, 1985.
Photo by Manley Commercial Photography, Inc.





Morgan Valley Road and Transmission Lines, as shown in the Davy McKee McLaughlin Gold Project Historical Report, 1985.
Photo by Manley Commercial Photography, Inc.

concerned with pollution from other people which would in turn reflect on them. You know what I mean? Because they did all the monitoring. They would, in fact, take responsibility for the water, so they kind of wanted to get the creek off of other people's property. So anyhow, we didn't exchange any money. We just exchanged land.

Swent: Who negotiated that with you?

Onstad: That was negotiated, actually, through Mike Attaway.

Swent: Early in--

Onstad: That was actually before I even started working there. It was between '80 and '83.

Swent: How did your neighbors feel about your doing that?

Onstad: Mr. Zujovich. He tried to convince us that, "Why would you want the highway going right past your ranch? You're going to be sorry. There's going to be noise and traffic." And we used to cross his property, also. We used to come across his property to get to ours. It was quite a hassle in the winter going across cow pastures. At that time, Mr. Zujovich was kind of anti-mine, too. And I think he didn't really like for you to progress. I think he still at that time had the idea that maybe one day he would own additional properties, and he kind of wanted to control. He liked the idea that you would have to pass his property to get to yours --that kind of an attitude. Over the years we have become good neighbors, but at that time still he wanted to control the decisions in the area. And, well, we went ahead with that exchange, which has really been wonderful for us.

I remember Homestake representatives coming over and taking noise samples. They wanted to know how much noise is in the area now, compared to what it's going to be when the mine is here, especially with the road going past. Well, it's been an asset for us. Now our driveway comes right off of the highway. We didn't have to change our entrance altogether. The woods is wonderful behind us. And actually we don't see the mine at all from the house because it's buffered by the trees.

Swent: The processing plant, you mean.

Onstad: The processing plant.

Swent: The mine is quite a ways down the road.

Onstad: Yes, the process, the mill process. The mill process, as I understood it, was going to be down on the meadow area, across from the guard post, further down, where the core shed is now?

Swent: Yes.

Onstad: That was the first plan for the process, and I've been told--I can't confirm it--but I was told that because of our residence that close and other neighboring parcels that the consideration was that the mill be moved up here. They were a little concerned, I think, of the lighting and the noise, too, maybe being that close to a residence. Someone had told me from Homestake a while back that, "You know that the mill was moved because of your house." I can't confirm that, but I think that was a consideration to move the mill up on the hill.

The highway entrance and the PG&E [Pacific Gas & Electric] and telephone has been a real asset for us. I never was anti-mine at all. Like I said, maybe it's because I didn't know what to expect from mining, being unfamiliar with it. Some neighbors were concerned about, "What about the air?" And, "What about the water?" You know, "We should be concerned about this." They had meetings. Jack Thompson conducted meetings with the public down at the core shed area. There were big get-togethers with all the community to explain what was happening. They always kept you posted what was going on. They were concerned about overcrowding the schools. They had a lot of meetings with school superintendents, and they donated a lot of money to the schools. Something like \$9 million a year goes into the community.

Swent: I was just wondering, you were new here, so did some of the old-timers react to you as newcomers?

Onstad: Oh, yes. Yes, definitely. Mr. Landman was one. He had a 900-and-some-acre ranch. Now, his mother was born here, and he and his brothers were born here.

Swent: He was a real old-timer.

Onstad: Yes. That's why I think you could gain some good knowledge from him. He thought the newcomers knew nothing about this area. He had cattle. I remember him making a statement one time when the Chandon Ranch was being parceled up and people like us were moving in. He said, "You can't run cattle here anymore." Because he used to have the whole area to graze, and little by little his territory was being cut back. Oh, he definitely was anti-mine. He had concerns about a mine coming in. They asked if he wanted to sell: No, he didn't.

But subsequently he did sell it after that. He sold forty acres to Bill Wilder, and then he sold the balance of the ranch to a developer. It's been all parceled up now. He sold that ranch for something like a \$100 an acre. If he had hung onto that property, it would be worth so much more today. But, again, his mother died. And when his mother died, shortly after that he sold the ranch. I think he and his brother--they never married when they were here. I think he felt like he was basically a prisoner here, to the ranch, because his mother wanted to stay here. And she was elderly, so they felt like they had to stay and take care of their mother.

And when his mother died, he got married. He met a lady who was a nurse, and they're still married today--Barbara Landman. They moved from here and went to Lower Lake. So it was sort of like you could see what was going through his mind: his mother died, he sold the ranch, got married, and moved out. He was kind of a bitter person in a way, and I think he felt like he was stranded here; kept here not of his own choice; felt obligated to take care of his mother and the ranch.

A Two-Year Fencing Job in Exchange for Cattle Grazing

Swent: You mentioned you and Janet Simpson got jobs. Did some of the local men get jobs as well, with Davy, for instance? Some of the ranchers?

Onstad: Well, they offered a job to my husband. He had the wood contract. Where the tailings dam is now, he harvested all the wood off of that before they started building the dam. And he built four miles of fence. See, nothing was really fenced here. So where the highway is now, the county wanted a fence on both sides of the highway. He started fencing from, well, where the old Morgan Valley Road used to be, at the beginning of Reiff Road--what used to be the Reiff Road, the old Reiff Road. He started fencing there, and he fenced all the way into Napa County. It took him about two years. He just did fencing. So both sides of the highway now are fenced.

And then, in exchange for fencing, they offered us the right to graze cattle on Homestake property around the mill area. And some of the property on our side of the road, too, is Homestake's property, so we graze that property. There was no lease money involved. It was just because of the labor for the fence we had to calculate how much--we bought all the materials, and the cattle

leasing then is subtracted from the fencing costs. That gave us a number of years to graze.

Swent: Do you continue to maintain the fence?

Onstad: Yes. We maintain the fence. They like the idea of us running cattle there because we're so close. In other words, if a cow should get on the road, you're right there to take care of it. With someone who lives a number of miles from here, you can't have a cow on the road. So we alternate. In fact, Sunday we just took cows back over here. We had them at home. We were branding and ear-tagging and doing all that, giving them shots. We just moved some cattle back on this side.

They're worried about fires.

Swent: Oh, I would think so.

Onstad: One pasture is right below the oxygen plant, and then that goes out to Morgan Valley Road. Well, if someone throws a cigarette out or whatever, you have a fire up here on this hill. Fires are going to go uphill, and so, for that reason, they want it grazed. It has just been wonderful for us. I mean, when we first came here we maybe had fifteen cows. Now we're up to ninety-six head. So that gave us an opportunity for a little additional income, too. So that's been wonderful. I'm hoping that we'll continue to graze here, and when the university comes in I assume they'll still want fire control too, so we'll see.

From 1985, Working as Secretary for Homestake Managers

Swent: Let's get back to Davy McKee. There's always a crisis time when they switch from construction over to operations. I don't know at what point Davy stops and Homestake begins, but anyway, your job transitioned and startup time was a crisis time, I'm sure. Davy was still in charge?

Onstad: Yes. I actually didn't stay with Davy McKee until the very end of their contract. I got an offer from Joe Young, who was the mill manager for Homestake. Joe came down to the Davy McKee trailer one day and wanted to know if I would transfer up to Homestake. Well, Davy's job wasn't finished then, but I talked to Klaus Thiel about this and said they had offered me a job and they were anxious to have somebody up there now because this was February of '85. They were just about to the end of startup.

Swent: I think they poured the first bar in March of '85.

Onstad: In March. So just before that time, I went up there and I started working for Homestake.

Swent: So you started first with Joe Young.

Onstad: Joe Young was the first Homestake boss that I had. He was the mill manager. I worked for Joe for about two years.

Swent: And where were you working?

Onstad: Up here.

Swent: In this same office.

Onstad: Yes. This office was built then. It was just down the hall with Joe Young.

Swent: How did Davy manage without you?

Onstad: Well, they transferred one of the other girls into my job then, and she finished out the Davy McKee contract. Well, it was kind of a dilemma for me. If I hadn't taken the job then--they needed someone now because they were going to start mining. And so it was either do I want a full-time job longer now, number one. And if I did, it was almost like transfer up there then or they would find someone else. So Klaus was understanding, and he transferred one of the other girls in my spot, and I moved up here to this office.

And then March fourth they poured the first gold bar. I got to see the first pouring. That was exciting. My husband and I both came over. That was a key event in the history of this mine. We had Harry Conger and Bill Humphrey. You know, the corporate people were here.

And then that following fall of '85 they had their dedication ceremony. Were you here then?

Swent: I was there for that, yes.

Onstad: Yes, the tours and--

Swent: September, I think. Wasn't it September of '85?

Onstad: September. Gave out hats, and I think they had a gold bar down there for you to take your picture with, and barbecue. And Dr. McLaughlin's widow, Sylvia, was there to accept a plaque for him.

That was up at the mine part, in the truck shop. They had it set up with displays and a little stage there for the management talks.

Swent: And they had an exhibit of all the permits.

Onstad: Over 270, yes.

Swent: [chuckles] That stack of permits.

Onstad: Well, if it weren't for the environmental people, we wouldn't be here--Ray Krauss's staff. A tremendous effort. They didn't think this mine would ever open.

Swent: In your job with Davy, were you aware of that?

Onstad: Oh, yes, yes. It was a big cost and big effort. They didn't think that California, with all its regulations, that this mine would ever open. What a challenge. And it has been state-of-the-art ever since. Yes, Ray Krauss is to be commended. And what a wonderful person: people-oriented, effective with government people and county people.

Swent: So the opening was a big day. I think they called it a dedication.

Onstad: Dedication. It was in September of '85.

Swent: Were your children here then?

Onstad: My son was here. My daughter never lived on the ranch. She went to San Jose State and she started working full-time for Ford Aerospace. She became an editor, and she was working for the proposal section there.

Swent: She has stayed down there?

Onstad: She stayed down there. She met Kevin Heher, her husband now. They've always lived in the Bay Area. Now she has three children: two daughters that are eight--they're twins, identical twins--and her son is four. They come up frequently. I've had the grandchildren all summer. Now she comes up more because the children like it. She's not a country girl per se. She likes to stay for a few days in the country, but she's not really a country person. She never grew up in the country. I mean, we'd come up weekends, but she's not like I am, where I grew up on a farm. However, now my son likes it in the country. Back in high school days, he had some reservations, because living this far out--

Swent: Where did he go to high school?

Onstad: Lower Lake. It was very small at the time he was there.

Swent: When did he finish?

Onstad: He graduated in 1984.

Swent: But the construction people were here.

Onstad: The last year or so of high school, yes. It was starting to grow, but most of your people that came in here--relocated to work here in the mine--had smaller children. You know, as your children get older, you don't relocate so much, for high school. So he probably didn't realize it as much as the elementary schools would have, I think.

And then he went on to Yuba College. And I got my degree from Yuba College, too. While I was working, I went to college--all while I was working, it seemed like--taking a class or two at a time. And in 1991, then, I got my degree, a two-year degree--A.S.--Associate Science. Then I went on after that and I got a certificate in early childhood education. So after I retired here, I did some substitute work for the daycare centers. I still have that need--I have to work, you know. That's what I was talking about, that five-year plan. I got my two-year degree, and then I got a certificate in early childhood. I took a lot of writing classes. Kind of got myself in a situation where I was employable in different type of areas.

Swent: Let's backtrack just a little bit. You worked for Joe Young, and then you worked for Jack.

Onstad: Yes. Then Linda Thomasson was Jack Thompson's secretary for a number of years. She actually started back when they were in Napa. Homestake had their first office in Napa, and then they had a little office in Lower Lake for a while. She worked for him the whole time. She transferred and moved to Denver, Colorado. Homestake had an office there for a while.

Well, I was down at this end of the hall, working for Joe Young, and Jack started interviewing. And I think he interviewed maybe three or four of us girls that worked in the office, and then he hired me, so then I transferred down the hall. And I worked for Jack, unfortunately, for only about four months; then he was promoted. We were just getting where we were working really well together, and then he was promoted to president of the Canadian operation.

Swent: And moved up to Canada.

Onstad: So he moved to Canada. And then Ron Parker became the general manager. And I stayed with Ron Parker, then, until I retired in '93.

Organizing Workshops for Better Clerical Personnel Relations

Swent: Now we'll get to your five-year plan. You had said that while you were working here you had workshops for the women?

Onstad: I went into Ron Parker one day, and at that time we were having some personnel clashes in the accounting department, and people were just not working together--shouting matches. I was working down this end of the hall, and I remember sitting at my desk one day, thinking, "This is not going to work. You have to work as a team. People have got to--"

So I approached Ron Parker and I said, "What would you think about my organizing a workshop for the clerical people to learn a little bit about each other's jobs and see how we can overcome some of the office politics and just work together as a team?" I said, "I don't view this as a hen party type thing. I think that maybe it's time that we get more communication between management and the clerical people. I view this as having a manager coming in and talk maybe once a quarter, and just learn each other's jobs and how we can work together." So he agreed.

Swent: Had you ever done anything like this before?

Onstad: No, no. But the first workshop I had, I had each girl come prepared to just describe what she does on her job and do it in any way they wanted. If they wanted to use slides or overheads or just talk, whatever they wanted. So we did that. Then the next time maybe we'd have a video of some type. And every time they'd have a manager come in.

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Swent: We might have lost a bit in the tape change. You said that sometimes clerical people are not aware of the decisions.

Onstad: Of management decisions. So I would usually start the workshop by talking about some of the latest things that were going on, like maybe some personnel: people who had left or new people coming on, some promotions that had taken place, or a new mine that Homestake

is looking at currently. I would start it out, and then we would use tapes and we'd have instruction, maybe on conflict and anger. We did a session one time on changes. For a while there we had a lot of management changes, and so you were getting used to working with a new boss and how to do this successfully.

At first some of the girls wouldn't come. They didn't want to come. And then suddenly they'd come to every one. They thought, "Oh, this is pretty good."

Swent: How often were you doing it?

Onstad: Once a quarter. We had four every year. And we'd bring in outside visitors. We had a lady talk about breast cancer; a person who came in and talked about living wills; and we had some of the corporate girls come up, some benefits and accounting people in corporate.

Swent: How long were the sessions?

Onstad: We'd generally start at seven in the morning and we'd finish up by noon. Sometimes they'd bring their lunch; sometimes we'd bring them lunch. It got to be a very useful tool. Pretty soon I would encourage the girls, "Is there anything you want to present to the group? Let me know ahead of time. We'll put it on the agenda." It gave us the experience of speaking. There were girls who were petrified to get up in front of a group. I said, "It's a friendly little group now. This is a good chance to get up and gain the experience."

Because also, in management today, they're wanting the girls to contribute--the women. Not girls; women. And so you never knew when you may be called on. We'd use that little slide viewer as a podium. And you'd be surprised how people would jump in and say, "I want to talk about what I'm doing in accounting right now." And Debbie Aber talked about shift work. It just became a really useful tool.

I had a little reaction from management in the beginning, like "Whoa! You're going to tie up my people for four hours?" Then it got to the point where the manager says, "Yes, do it. This is great." And they started encouraging me to continue. I think I had workshops for about three years. And Debbie is still doing that. Debbie Aber replaced me when I retired.

Swent: You had mentioned what they're doing today. For the record, one reason the office is so very quiet today is that all the managers are over at Konocti at an all-day seminar on dealing with conflict and anger. So your idea may have percolated up.

Onstad: They're very good here about seminars and training classes. When I was going to Yuba, they were very receptive. They reimbursed me for textbooks and registrations. Yes, several employees had their expenses paid for college. We don't have a four-year college here. Had there been, I would have taken the other two years.

A Five-Year Personal Improvement Plan

Swent: But you had mentioned earlier that it's important to have a five-year plan, and you had your own.

Onstad: That's when we talked about it. We talked about changes in the future when the mine wasn't here. My five-year plan was to get my degree, take writing classes, which in turn now are helping me. I took the early childhood classes, which gave me a chance to substitute in places in the area. I guess I didn't realize that most of my interests were around children. I hadn't really planned it that way, but it seems like the writing and the early childhood classes and the coloring book all seem to center around children.

Swent: The coloring book. We haven't mentioned that.

Onstad: So it is a five-year plan. We paid the ranch off and put us in a little better financial position after we retired. And building up the cattle herd. It was all sort of spokes of a wheel that in the end gave me the ability to retire fully.

Swent: Although it's a very busy retirement.

Onstad: The tours.

Planning and Leading Public Tours of the McLaughlin Mine

Swent: The tours, yes.

Onstad: Okay. I did a lot of homework on that before I started the tours. I knew I was getting ready to retire. I talked to Ron Parker about doing the tours. I would go in his office and pull out his operation manuals and study about the circuits and repro pages out of there, and I'd tag along with one of the mill superintendents and say, "Show me the autoclave." Well, let's see. I grabbed the mine manager and said, "Next time you're out in the pit, I'd like

to ride along with you," and so on. I learned a lot getting out in the field. And that just helped me tremendously.

Swent: So now you do their tours.

Onstad: I do all the public tours. I have school groups. See, in fourth grade in California they study the gold rush, so most fourth grade teachers, as part of that unit bring them up here.

Swent: From a lot of the local schools or only from Lower Lake?

Onstad: Lower Lake, Middletown, Clearlake. I have them come from Santa Rosa, Ukiah. I have a home study group coming out in a couple of weeks from Ukiah. All over, out of the county, also. So they kind of tie that in with the--

Swent: Do you do this year round?

Onstad: We start in May, usually around Memorial Day, until the end of October. Now, the schools can come any time, weather permitting. They can come earlier than May, but the public tours are from May 'til October. I have usually four public tours a month. Groups. I had the Lions Club. The Riviera Ladies Club is coming on Friday. I had the Cub Scouts.

Swent: What is your routine for that? Where do you meet?

Onstad: We meet at the guard post down here. Take them through the model room. We usually start at ten, go through the model room, drive them around through the mill, take them up to the open pit, and they can pick up rocks and take them back. If it's a school group I usually try to get pieces of equipment up there so they can see the size of the trucks. Then we watch a video in here. I hand out brochures. I think this month I have seven tours total.

Producing an Educational Coloring Book

Onstad: And that's what prompted me, then, to do the coloring book. As I was showing schools and the public how they were reclaiming some of these properties or I'd talk about the bluebird boxes, they were surprised to see these things. They said, "Oh, I never realized that the mine did all these things." Or, like you said, "I didn't realize there was a mine here." So every time I'd do a tour, people were so surprised about the hydroseeding and the bluebird boxes, I thought, "You know what? It's time to write a story about this." And I thought, "Gee, I would like the teachers

as part of that unit to talk about the environmental part of the mining, too."

Especially with the mine wind-down, shut-down, people in the community would get concerned, "Oh, what's going to happen when they leave?" You know, people still think about the old mines, how they used to do it--mercury mines, especially. And it's not like that any more. "Let me show you! It's not like that any more." And so I showed them that down at the mine now they're doing so much reclamation, and so I point that out. Boy, they say, "Wow! I never realized that." But that's why I wrote the coloring book.

Swent: Where did you get the idea of Rodney?

Onstad: I don't know. I saw a roadrunner a couple of times at the pit. It was during the summer. Yes, at the open pit there was a roadrunner, and he had a lizard in his mouth and he was zipping past us, and you can't help but laugh at them. I mean, they're really a character, flipping their tail, you know. And I thought, "Roadrunner would make kind of a funny character," you know, and then I just came up with the name Rodney.

Swent: He's the miner in your coloring book.

Onstad: He's the miner, yes. He's the mining guy. And he tells the story.

Swent: The name of it is *Miners Respect the Earth, with Rodney Roadrunner*.

Relocating Bats and Rescuing Owlets

Onstad: Yes. I wanted them to see all the environmental aspects of the mine. And this mine particularly always had so much recognition across the country, especially with the relocation of the Townsend bats. You knew about that story?

Swent: That's in here? [turning pages]

Onstad: We had a colony of Townsend bats right in the middle of the pit, and when we started mining there back in '85, they searched for weeks trying to find another mine tunnel because they had to close this one off. And they did. Luckily, they found two more tunnels outside of the pit, so they closed this current one off. And they waited for two weeks, wondering where the bats had gone. Some of

them came over to my house! I have a log house. They clung to the logs in my house, but eventually they found these other tunnels, so they stopped construction and they built bat roosts inside of them, and they built these bars in front so people wouldn't bother them. And Dr. Dixie Pierson, now--she's from Berkeley, also--she comes up and monitors these bats. And they've doubled in number now, so they got a lot of recognition from the Wildlife Enhancement Council on that. People weren't aware of that, so I would tell that story, that there's more to mining than moving rocks.

And the hack boxes. We worked with the Santa Rosa bird rescue center. They brought up some great horned owlets about, well, it was about the last year I worked here--owlets that had fallen out of the nest. And people would bring them into the rescue center. They're not old enough to fend for themselves, so the rescue center builds these hack boxes made out of plywood, with all these little air holes and a feed chute in them. Then they look for volunteers to feed them.

I raised my hand one day, and I said, "I'll feed these little great horned owlets." Now, this went into my coloring book. It's on a tree. But Santa Rosa rescue center built it up on an air monitoring tower. I don't like heights that well, so it took me a while to get used to climbing up the ladder to the tower. And I said, "What am I supposed to feed them?"

They said, "Well, what do you think an owl eats? Mice, snakes, rabbits and squirrels."

I said, "Oh, great. How am I supposed to find these?"

And they said, "Well, how about road kills?" So I had my little bucket. I call it my gut bucket. And I'd go around picking up run-over snakes and rabbits, and I'd put them in the bucket and climb up this tower and drop them in the feed chute.

I did it for five weeks, and then we opened up one side of the box. They wouldn't come out. They had a good thing going, you know. So three or four of us, then, waited, and we monitored this hack box, and a couple of days later one of them came out, and then the other two came out. We put food down here on the ground, trying to entice them out. We wouldn't put food inside any more, so we hung it in the trees. They finally came out, and they've been sighted now at Davis Creek reservoir. So there's quite a story behind that. And that was fun. I learned a lot of biology.

Involving School Children in Habitat Reclamation

Onstad: And bluebird boxes. The Oak Hill Middle School students built those, and they hung them on the trees all over that meadow. Fifty, sixty boxes.

They check them for nesting, and then they come out and clean them out every year. So they try to involve the schools whenever they can. The also have school children planting trees with their little transparent PVC pipe that they put the seedlings inside of to keep the squirrels and rabbits from chewing them up. They used to just put like a mesh over them, but they chew them up, so these have been working. My only question was how do they water them, when I first saw them. The dew collects inside, and it drips down in there.

Swent: So they don't need extra water.

Onstad: No. This [pointing to a picture in the book] is a hydroseeding truck blowing the chopped-up straw and flowers against the hills. And here are the students planting trees, too. And then I wanted to talk about habitats. Kids weren't familiar with the word "habitat" and "reclamation", and so I tried to bold those words. And water sampling in here. [continuing to turn pages of the book] Wetlands? You're familiar with the word "wetlands". And water sampling. There's a page in here of air sampling. And grazing.

I always ask the kids when they come on, "Why do you think a gold mine would allow cows on their property?" Of course, 95 percent of them say, "For the milk." [laughter] I say, "Well, not exactly. Not in this case." The calves like the milk, the little babies. They like the milk, but the mine wants to keep the grass down so we don't have a fire here. Then there's elk and antelope. The elk and antelope are starting to coming in here. One year I had an antelope in with the cows. I'm sure there will be more when they finish here and they turn it over to wildlife. They'll have more elk and antelope. So I wanted to get that picture in there.

Well, they're not really hidden, but there are animals and birds: "Find the ten hidden birds and animals." Marcie Long did my illustrations for me. I kind of told her what I wanted and sketched it out and she took it from there. I said, "Marcie, these kids are smart today now. They're going to find that owl right off the bat." But I said, "Oh, that's okay."

Swent: What age group are you aiming at?

Onstad: I had thought that this would be from probably up, stretching it, maybe fourth grade; but first grade to probably third grade. But because they're studying about mining in fourth grade, it could be used. And then I give them a test back here because I want them to learn new words about mining.

Swent: Have you had reactions?

Onstad: Yes, they're in some of the local bookstores. The museum in Lower Lake is carrying them. And Lakeport museum. Dr. Cornelison over at the county school--

Swent: I interviewed him, incidentally.

Onstad: That's right. You told me that. Well, I went over to see him about three weeks ago. He has a lady on his staff that handles curriculum. She was having a meeting with all the principals now. She's probably had that meeting now. They were going to consider using this as a supplemental text for all the fourth grades. Well, we're having, like, 2500 students and I need to get back with them and see. They were going to approach all the principals and see what their reaction was.

The Barrick Mine in Washington, they're opening a gold mine, hopefully next year. And they've had a lot of reaction from the community which is not positive. And as I understand the geology there, there's a mountain range and the mine is opening up on one side of mountain. And on the other side of the mountain they have a group in the community that's very activist against mining. I think it's a commune-type group. The environmental manager at Barrick asked if I would tour--there's a family that's part of the commune, and they were coming here because they were told that the McLaughlin Mine is a model type mine, and they wanted to see it.

And so I toured the family. I thought that they felt pretty positive when they left here. They liked what the McLaughlin Mine was doing. Their concern was, "Yeah, but is the Barrick Mine going to do the same? That's what we want to know. Now, we don't think that they're going to do the same thing."

So then the environmental manager up there saw my coloring book. He's been down to see Ray and he knew what the McLaughlin Mine was about. He saw my book, and so he called me and asked me how many books I had left.

I said, "I have about 400."

He said, "Send them to me because I need all the help I can get." So they use them up there. So that was a nice order for

me. I've actually invested some money in this. I had to hire an illustrator, and the printing of it. But all my expenses are paid now.

Swent: It's a beautiful job.

Onstad: The McLaughlin Mine bought them for the mine, and I give them out on the tours now for the children. Well, this [demonstrating] is actually my coloring book binder here. I've sent many out. And I've had some positive leads. The Bureau of Land Management may buy some next month. They said their budget comes out in November, so I need to follow up on some of the orders.

Swent: I was wondering what the reaction has been from children.

Onstad: Oh, they like it. They like it. I don't think they're really viewing this so much as a coloring book as they are a story, and that's good. That's good. I think I'd rather the story got out. And I show them. See, what I have in here I can show them out here on the tour, so that part is good. The teachers like it because it gives them another tool. And actually, the teachers don't realize what we're doing here, either, until they come out. So I think it's more of a text about what mining is all about today than it is a coloring book, so that's why it could stretch into at least fourth grade.

Swent: As I told you, I was particularly struck by the very beginning, where you say, "Where minerals are mined cannot be chosen, but mining is only a temporary use of the land."

Onstad: And that's what we show them, too.

Swent: It's a fundamental idea that so few people really get.

Onstad: I could do an offshoot of this one. I've been thinking of maybe doing one talking about the products of mining. When you say people don't realize--

Swent: Of course, that has been done, but it needs to be done over and over.

Onstad: More jobs. The different types of jobs in mining. And the fact that we have as many women out there driving the trucks as men, a lot of people don't--

Swent: You can never say those things too often.

Onstad: No. And during the process, itself, I had originally--in fact, when I first started writing this, I had it too lengthy. I

actually started talking about this process, how you take the rocks out and put it through the grinding mills and the crushing, and then this, too. And it was, "No, do the environmental one now." And so I still may do another one on this particular process, which with the autoclave, now, is all you need here. So I have ideas of possibly doing another one. I don't know.

Swent: You're never going to run out of ideas!

Onstad: I want to do this one for a while longer yet because I think I have some good opportunities: California Mining Association, Barbara Bennett, Barbara Stewart, now.

Swent: I know Barbara.

Onstad: She has one of these. She said, "You know, Marion, if you had given me this book about two months earlier when I was ordering for my convention, I would have ordered your book and maybe not some of the things I did order." But she said, "Let me keep this in the file because next year I may consider it." So there are possibilities there, and I think as the months go on and new budgets come in, I don't think I'm finished marketing this yet.

Swent: No, no. You're just beginning.

Onstad: And I was really pleased because thirty days after I picked it up from the print shop, I had paid back my expenses. That gave me a little encouragement to market it. I think it's just a simple story that a lot of people aren't aware of. And once they see it, they say, "Wow! I never knew that. I thought they just walked away and left a big mess, you know?" I think a lot of people still think that. And if they haven't toured a mine like this they will never know.

The Mine a "Free Security Service" for Cattle Ranchers

Swent: What about the water quality and the air quality? I mean, just you as a rancher. Has the mine had any effect on your ranching at all?

Onstad: No. Homestake does monitor our wells.

Swent: Your cattle that are grazing around here.

Onstad: They're grazing out here. I never lost any because of some sickness or--we give them shots. We give them a series of three

different kinds of shots. You actually have to be more concerned--we fill a tank up here. We pump water into a tank which is a little bit better than if they have to drink in polluted areas. What I mean by pollution is little pockets of water that are stagnant. As the creeks become dry and you get down to little water holes, you have to be careful there because the deer come in and drink out of that, and they can spread leptospira, so we have to give the cattle lepto shots so they won't pick it up from the wild grazing animals.

So if you have a fresh-water tank, it's better for the cattle. That's what we're doing up here. We have a tank, and we have to pump, make sure it's full of water. That will encourage them to drink there. They'll still drink in the creeks, too, but if they have a choice, they'll usually go for the fresh water, because cattle can die from lepto.

Swent: Has there been less rustling?

Onstad: Oh, yes, yes. We haven't had a problem with rustling. Since the fencing went in, the people who were really involved with that are no longer here. Actually, on Homestake's property we're not the only one that grazes. Around the mine area, the open pit area, Della Underwood and Kurt Underwood graze that portion--the old Gamble ranch, the north end of that ranch. They're grazing that part.

We were approached about grazing that. Ron Parker asked me one time, "What do you think about running your cows down there on the Gamble ranch?" But I thought we wouldn't be able to do an effective job of it because driving that far and keeping up with what's going on with the water and making sure nobody is rustling or just generally--you have to keep monitoring at least every couple of days. You've got to drive through and check your cattle out. And I didn't think we'd be able to do that good a job. It's not that far, but still, especially in the winter, driving down that old Knoxville road... So I thanked him for offering it to us, and they put it out for bids. I thought it was considerate of them to ask, to check first if we wanted it.

Swent: I was poking around Knoxville last spring one day. I don't remember exactly what month, but it was when the grass was very high and still green. And it was actually a rainy day. I remember Tony Cerar and I went down there, and he showed me all the things that had been there when he was working at Knoxville. And there was a lot of shooting going on up on the hillside. I was a little nervous about it. I don't know enough about guns to know what kind of shooting it was, but--

Onstad: See, Homestake doesn't allow any firearms.

Swent: Somebody was shooting.

Onstad: Was it on Bureau of Land Management ground at that point, too?

Swent: I don't think it was on Homestake's property. I don't know. Is there hunting that's allowed along there?

Onstad: Yes, on BLM [land] there is.

Swent: In the spring?

Onstad: We have people across from the core shed area. There's Bureau of Land Management. It's the Knoxville public lands entrance. We have people shooting there all the time.

Swent: I see.

Onstad: Yes, they're allowed to do it. Just target practice, mostly.

Swent: I see. Well, it could have been target practice, I don't know.

Onstad: But it could have been somebody looking for deer, too.

Swent: It made me a little nervous to hear all this gunfire, but--

Onstad: We get concerned, too, because we're right across from that Knoxville public lands, and you never know if somebody is shooting at your cows or just shooting to be shooting. That is a concern. They have more problems on the way to Lake Berryessa. Some of those ranchers there. They have had cows shot. But that's more remote; here it's a little bit--you know, our ranch is right across from all this activity, and people are a little more careful, I think, to get into mischief.

And that's a concern for me now, as the mine winds down. It may make a difference for us, too. We almost feel like we have free security service here. No, really. By the sign, it's well lit up, and that kind of reflects over on our driveway a little bit. And even the lights from the mine here--people are a little more careful. They don't know if someone is patrolling. But now when the mine closes down, it might make a difference.

I have more of a concern with the mine closing than I did with the mine opening up. I feel, "Gee, they've been great neighbors. And, gosh, when they're not here, I don't know. It may be another Wild West around here." [laughing] I have different considerations, I guess, than most of my neighbors have.

Swent: That's coming full circle.

Onstad: I am interested in thinking when the university is here. I don't know what to expect with them coming in.

Earlier Plans to Expand the Ranch

Onstad: When you asked me the question about what was our approach when Homestake wanted to buy our ranch, I think at that time we also didn't really view the fact that we only owned the 100 acres. We sort of had in mind to expand our property. We actually talked to Al McCosker, who owned the McCosker ranch. That's the ranch that has the mill on it. The process is on the old McCosker ranch. We visited Al McCosker in Oakland. He lived in Oakland Hills there. He was a contractor for highways. He was actually quite receptive of taking our duplex as a down payment.

Swent: You still owned that.

Onstad: We were considering buying the McCosker ranch. It adjoined our ranch. But we didn't feel that we could buy it by ourselves, and so we talked to our neighbors in Palo Alto, Dr. Robert Anderson. He was professor at San Jose State. So Dr. Anderson and his wife, Drew, came up here. We brought them up here and we walked around the McCosker ranch and said, "What do you think? He's willing to sell. Would you want to partner with us to buy this ranch?" I think there was about 7 or 800 acres. And we seriously were thinking of expanding over here.

Well, Drew Anderson was interested, but Dr. Anderson--oh, I don't think it was just right for him. And they subsequently bought a place in Shasta, and they have a place in Pajaro Dunes, and I think they have a place in Hawaii now, too, so they're quite dispersed. But the funny thing is, Dr. Anderson has been up here many times bringing his metallurgy group up here to tour the mine. And I have to admit that I razz him now. "Bob, you could have owned this place."

Swent: But that was long before--

Onstad: Homestake then bought it.

Then the McIntyre ranch, which is where the tailings dam is, that was 1600 acres. And they were actively looking for a buyer for that ranch. There was still a partial house on that when we first came up here, and we talked to another neighbor--Ed

Contreras, who had ten acres that he would come to on weekends-- and said, "Would you be interested in buying the McIntyre ranch?" It was completely wooded. I mean, it had grazing, too, but there was a lot of trees on it. I said, "We could even harvest wood to help pay for it."

Well, he, again, didn't think it was a good idea. Hindsight is always easy, but--so we were actively really looking to expand here at that time, thinking we would buy more land. And, well, Homestake bought that one and put the tailings on it. That was part of our original idea, was to have more land than we have now. But then, as the mine came in and when I started working here, we sort of settled in where we are. It's a sizeable land, to have corrals and a working arrangement with cattle.

Building a Log House from a Kit

Swent: And you built your house.

Onstad: Yes, that's the other thing I was going to say. We had the Airstream here for I guess about two years while we were building. We ordered a log kit called Real Log Homes from Dayton, Nevada, and had it trucked out. We built it ourselves. We would do one row at a time. It was one of those kits. It was all numbered, like 1A through 1Q. We'd try to do one row a day. It's a lot of work. Heavy, heavy logs. They were Ponderosa pine. But you'd have to drill the holes, and then the spikes that went through it were about this big [demonstrating], and hammered those spikes in, and then you'd put caulking, and you'd put a strip through there, an insulation strip, and then the next day we'd put another row on. We built it by ourselves.

Swent: What sort of foundation did you--

Onstad: We did our own foundation. Yes, we did a concrete perimeter. It's not a slab. It's a perimeter foundation. And we did that ourselves. When they say you can build a log house on a weekend, don't believe them. We're still actually--in fact, we're remodeling again right now. I don't know if we'll ever finish it! But I have to be honest about a log house. It's very easy to heat. And they stay cool in the summer. But I would never build another one. Woodpeckers love it. The woodpeckers think it's wonderful. Holes.

Swent: And discouraging them is really impossible, isn't it?

Onstad: Yes. On the south side of our house--and you have to treat these every year. You have to treat them every year. Like, a regular house, you paint it every few years. A log home--I think if I had known this--you have to spray with a protective coat every year. But even despite that, on the south side of the house, the sun, the hot sun is just deteriorating the logs. It does not hold up well at all. So we're contemplating now removing the whole south wall and putting artificial stone on that one side to keep the sun from destroying it.

And it's expensive. It's expensive to maintain it. I never realized that. These are things they don't tell you when you buy a log house. They're very popular, and I suspect that maybe in colder climates, Idaho, Montana, Minnesota, probably you would have better success.

Swent: Maybe the sun wouldn't do so much damage there.

Onstad: Or if our house had been situated in the woods, maybe a little more. It's kind of on a knoll there, and that one side is just exposed to the sun. So I have to be honest, I probably would not build a log home again if we had a choice of other construction.

Swent: What do you do for water?

Onstad: We have wells. And Homestake monitors the wells. Then we have reservoirs, too, for the cattle. And Aaron uses water out of one reservoir for his gardening. So it's been great, though.

Planning for Activities after the Mine Closes

Swent: You might still have your camp.

Onstad: I have to be honest, I still do consider that and may do it. I think my granddaughters, as they get a little older, could work into that--maybe summer vacations from college or something. I could see them doing that. I've been teaching them riding. I've been teaching them all about horses now.

Swent: Do you have horses here, too?

Onstad: We have one old horse left. It's the horse we had when we were in Mountain View and Palo Alto. He's probably twenty-eight years old. He's perfect for the grandchildren. They scoot under his belly or pick up his hooves. He's not going to kick them. But now they're getting so that they know enough about grooming them

and how to take care of a horse, now they want one that can move a little faster, so I'm probably going to be in the market looking for a couple of more horses, younger ones. But they could fit in very well with a camp, helping me. I still may consider that.

Now, with the new highway and electricity and everything, it's more feasible. And the children do come up here. They love it. They just love it. We have paddle boats. We go around on the ponds, and we do fishing with them. They really like it, so it's possible.

Swent: Anything can happen.

Onstad: It's possible.

Swent: With a five-year plan.

Onstad: Yes, yes, that's still in the back of my mind. And working with children in the daycare centers. Children seem to like me. I always say children and dogs like me. [chuckling] And I like them. Because I always say if a child doesn't like you, he's going to tell you so. They're honest.

Swent: That's a compliment.

Onstad: If a dog doesn't like you, he's going to bite you. I say children and dogs and animals of all kinds seem to flock to me, [laughing] so maybe I'm missing my calling. I don't know. I should have been a teacher.

Swent: Well, you're doing a lot of teaching. A lot of teaching.

Onstad: Automatically. I didn't realize it, but, you know--

Swent: You are teaching.

Onstad: When I have children around me, I always have a tendency to not just babysit, but I have a tendency to teach them something. It just comes natural for some reason.

Swent: Well, your tour-guiding is certainly teaching. That's what it's all about.

Onstad: Yes. Adults, too. I'm teaching adults, too, on the tours. I give them about a three-hour tour. I usually don't finish up 'til around one o'clock. So I always tell them, "I hope that at the end of this tour, now, that I was able to teach you something about mining, because otherwise," I always tell them, "I feel like

I've let you down, because I want you to know something about mining by the time you leave here."

They all seem to say, "Oh, we certainly did. We never knew that there was this much involved. We never knew there was so much technology."

Swent: You mentioned briefly earlier about the winding down of the mine. Is there concern about this among your neighbors and friends?

Onstad: Oh, definitely. The whole community, of course, because this is a big employer here.

Swent: Is it just vague fears or are they coming out with them?

Onstad: Oh, I think that word has probably been spread around enough now that they know that the open pit is nearing completion. There has never been anything in the papers about it, but I think word is, through employees and whatever, I think--yes. Well, a lot of the employees have transferred. They're finding other jobs now. They don't want to wait until the last minute. Probably most of their concern will be, "Will I be able to sell my house?" You know, properties don't move that fast here, so a lot of them are putting their homes on the market now, and they figure if it sells, they can rent until their job runs out.

Again, I've never worked around a mine before, so I've never gone through a closing of a mine. But I think they are anticipating here and I'm sort of anticipating in my mind, you may have a lot of theft at the end. You may have a lot of people angry, like this seminar we're having. "Why me? How come he gets to stay and I don't?" And from a rancher's standpoint, I'm concerned about maybe as their job is ending, I may find cows shot. People may decide to take a head of beef on their way out. They may be angry at me, as an innocent bystander, because I'm still able to stay here. I don't know, I can't confirm these thoughts on my part, but you may have people shooting your mailbox because they're mad. Their job is over now. They may be looking at me like, "Boy, how come you are able to stay?"

Swent: Do you know if there are people who are thinking of conversion kinds of things that they can do? New businesses?

Onstad: Yes, yes. In fact--

Swent: Industries to come in?

Onstad: One of the men that's working in the environmental now, he has just opened up a computer store. I think his wife runs it during

the day, and when he's off work he goes down there. Yes, people are thinking that. Georgia McAllister, she's taking real estate classes, so she's thinking in that direction. There's a new school that opened up right behind her house. It's brand new this year, and I think she used to work for the school district, and I think she's thinking in that direction. Maybe she'll work for the schools again. Yes, they are thinking that way. One of the girls is taking accounting classes. She's thinking, "Well, maybe I can do taxes or do a public accountant position." There aren't that many jobs available here, so when this one winds down, there may be some office work.

Swent: One thing that we didn't talk about at all, and I don't know if this was anything you were aware of when you worked at Davy, was the union situation. We didn't mention that.

Onstad: This is a non-union mine. They have had some union threats, especially during construction.

Swent: Were you involved? Did you have to cross any of those picket lines?

Onstad: No. Oh, I shouldn't say no. One time, yes.

Swent: Well, it wasn't technically called a picket line, I guess. It was called something else.

Onstad: Well, sort of. I think they did call it--where the sign is now, I do remember walking to work through--I just walked right past them. That's the only occasion that sticks out in my mind. They have the roll gates there that a guard pulls, in case of any problems.

Swent: I think there was a rather tense time for a while, wasn't there?

Onstad: I believe that was during construction, though.

Swent: Yes.

Onstad: If I remember right. Especially when you have so many contractors, you're going to have more of that problem. I can't answer that question very well. I don't recall a time at Homestake that they had a problem with unions, but then I may not--

Swent: But I was just wondering if in your personal--whether anything--

Onstad: No. Just on one occasion I do remember people standing there with signs by the front entrance. No, they've been very careful to keep this non-union.

Swent: But the first trailer was down at the mine itself.

Onstad: At the pit.

Swent: And then the incident that you're talking about was when they moved up here.

Onstad: Right. My son worked as a security guard here for a while when it was still under construction.

Swent: And then I think there was a period when there was--I'm not sure, but when there was even a conflict between unions, jurisdictions.

Onstad: I'm not familiar with that.

Swent: Maybe not. So none of this affected you, then.

Onstad: No. No, the only thing--I think of one incident, one time when I was working for Bob Sinclair. We had Argee Contractors--they're the ones that basically did the mine stripping, and I believe they did the reservoir. And then we had the McLaughlin contractors, who did the road and the buildings. I remember them squabbling over--one of them--I think the Argee people--said that the McLaughlin people were too many feet over on their particular pad where their trailer was. And I remember them coming in and complaining to Bob Sinclair. And I remember him saying, "Get back out there and get to work. We're not in the real estate business here." It was like he had no time for this kind of petty bickering between contractors. But, yes, they had some problems like that, I think, between contractors. But nothing major sticks out in my mind now.

There were about 1100 people here then, during construction.

Swent: That many.

Onstad: Yes. And then Homestake, I think, hired probably 70 percent locals?

Swent: Yes.

Onstad: Some of the expertise areas, like the autoclave, they brought in from some other mine.

Swent: I think that was part of their contract that they had to hire a high percentage of local people. Their permit, I mean; not contract. Their permit.

Onstad: This has probably been--well, I know this has been the best job I've ever had, and I've worked almost forty years in different companies. And I think of all the different bosses I've had--they are such sincere, friendly people. You know Jack Thompson: mild voice, just a very kind type person. And Bill Humphrey: same way. Joe Young: nice to work with. Mike Attaway, in the earlier days--just very down-to-earth. Ron Parker: another soft-spoken type person. We worked very similar, I think. I used to think about that. He and I were great list-makers, and we worked pretty well together. And every boss I had here moved up. They all were promoted and went on their way. Ron Parker now is in charge of the Canadian operation. Jack Thompson is in line for the CEO position.

Swent: He's president now.

Onstad: Yes, and I understand Mr. Conger is probably going to retire at the end of the year. He has just worked his way right up. So the management people here--Ray Krauss--are just very people-oriented, and I think that's what makes a company successful, too. When you're considerate of your employees and neighbors, it makes it work.

Swent: They have that name, I guess--that reputation. It's interesting.

Onstad: And I think even some of the former neighbors that had some reservations dealing with this company, over the years now, even they have come around and say, "You know, they really have been positive here after all." You know? So you're even able to instill that feeling even with your opposition. Not all the opposition, though. You still have the Mike Johnstons over there, and I don't think they'll ever change him. But those that had some apprehension or maybe didn't totally understand, did come around. They [Homestake] set a good track record here.

Swent: I wonder what will remain when it all winds down--if any of that will affect the community in general.

Onstad: It will. It will, if for no other reason, they hired 350 people now. The schools are going to see a big vacancy--if not the students, the money, the support. And the fact that we won't have a mine to tour any more. Now, that's kind of unique. Not every community has the opportunity to see mining. That's what I tell them on the tours, too. I say, "Boy, what an asset we have. A

chance to see a mine. It's a community asset." So that will be a vacancy.

Swent: Well, they said when they started that it was going to be--I think they said twenty-five years, didn't they?

Onstad: I think it was twenty.

Swent: Twenty. And it's going to be--

Onstad: Close to that. Now, even when the pit closes, they have all the stockpiles down there, low-grade.

Swent: They're going to keep on processing.

Onstad: That's going to take three to five years or more up there at the mill. They're estimating 2000, at least, up here at the mill. We won't have as many people, but--and as I understand it, as they close an area, that will be turned over to the university. They've given 100 acres of ground to the university now, already. It's all serpentine. And the university was saying, "Wow! At last we can get in there and find out what grows on serpentine soils." And the asbestos that comes off of serpentine on these public lands? Get in there and do some studies on that.

I imagine that when the pit closes now, it's my understanding, unless times have changed, part of the pit will stay open, will fill in again with water, and I think that's going to be turned over to wildlife--the Davis Creek area and the open pit. They bought 9000 acres from the Gamble ranch, and I don't know the latest on that property, but it is my understanding that they're trying to trade with the Bureau of Land Management: turn that over to the BLM, and BLM would in turn find 9000 acres with some minerals on it. And if that's the case, and I think this is what Ray would like, to bring in the elk and antelope and turn that into a wildlife preserve. I'm hoping that's what's going to happen.

Swent: That would be wonderful.

Onstad: I don't know that much about what will take place when the university comes here. This building is supposed to stay, and the lab. Everything else is supposed to come down again--sell it to another mine, I suppose. But the university will use that lab.

Swent: It's a big building.

Onstad: Yes. I suppose you'll see a lot of mining engineers here, students and geology students.

Swent: Biologists.

Onstad: Biologists and different explorations, you know, experimenting with plants. I'm not familiar with what goes on at a research center, but--

Swent: It will be a good facility for a lot of things.

Onstad: So that's going to be interesting to me, too, because I don't know quite what to expect or how much activity. I'm not sure how much activity will be going on here when they close.

Swent: But you'll be right next door.

Onstad: And I'll be right next door. Maybe I'll fire up my computer and get in the middle of some work with the university, who knows?

Swent: You might. You very well might. You could.

Onstad: Or housing. I don't know. What I'm a little unsure of is are these students going to be traveling from Davis, from Berkeley, here? They're going to be staying in the area, I guess. I don't know.

Swent: Maybe you could open a bed-and-breakfast. [laughter]

Onstad: Well, these are questions I kind of have at the moment in my mind for the future here. I'm hoping that we'll continue grazing, that we'll still be running cattle over here.

Swent: It will be interesting to see, won't it?

Onstad: I have more concerns about it winding down than I had when they were starting. Ray is the man that we deal with primarily. We deal with him with the cattle grazing, and I'm sure that he will continue to be the liaison here. I know they'd like to pull him down to corporate. From my standpoint, I'm hoping Ray will be here during the university days. I don't know what his plans are.

Swent: I wonder what his five-year plan is.

Onstad: Yes, right!

Swent: We've covered all my points. There may be something else you wanted to talk about.

Onstad: There was busing here in the beginning, you know, from the park-and-ride there in Lower Lake. They sold all the buses a number of years ago. Employees are now driving on their own.

Swent: Do most of them ride-share? Do they carpool?

Onstad: Yes, they carpool. A lot of carpooling now. We'll see a big difference in traffic past our ranch.

Swent: That road, though, this morning--it's a real challenge to keep it maintained, isn't it?

Onstad: Yes, it was turned over to the county. Well, that's when I was still working here.

Swent: Have you been on it? Well, I don't suppose it has changed in the last few days. It's several feet.

Onstad: Yes. That was all from the rain the last two winters, really. I saw some surveyors out there now, so hopefully they're going to work on that before the rains come again.

Swent: They were working on it today.

Onstad: Are they?

Swent: Yes.

Onstad: Homestake, you know, had responsibility for that road until I think it was about three years ago. That is a little bit of a concern to me, talking about the road. Once the mine isn't here, I don't know that the county will feel the need to keep it up.

Swent: It must be terribly expensive to keep that up.

Onstad: However, with less truck traffic maybe it will hold up better, too.

Swent: Maybe.

Onstad: But that was one thought I had recently. Like, wow, when Homestake isn't here, the road will probably really go, and nobody will fix it.

Swent: There are two places that are just always a problem.

Onstad: Well, you think about the numbers of heavy, heavy loads of trucks coming up here, though. Without that kind of traffic, it should--

Swent: Maybe.

Onstad: I still say it's probably the best highway in the county. Really. Of course, I can compare it to the way it used to be. There were

times when you had to have chains just to get up and down those grades, so I still say it's a big improvement.

Swent: It's a beautiful drive.

Was there anything else?

Onstad: I don't think so. I think we've covered just about really what I had to say.

Swent: And we don't have crystal balls, so we don't know what's ahead, but you've certainly been able to get the best out of every situation you've come across.

Onstad: I guess if I were to sum it up, it's been a positive relationship with this company ever since they first met us in 1980, I guess-- the first time we met any Homestake people. I'm glad I didn't sell my property--

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Onstad: --and the people that were concerned didn't really have a reason to be concerned. Some of them that sold, hopefully it wasn't just out of fear because that would have been a shame.

Swent: It has been good for you.

Onstad: So I'll probably be sitting on my porch there in my rocking chair one day [laughing] and seeing something new over here, I guess.

Relics of Former Buildings in the Area

Swent: Just to add a little bit. You were saying that there were still parts--

Onstad: On the McCosker ranch there were still traces of the house there when we first bought our land.

Swent: Is that down by the core shed?

Onstad: Where the core shed is now.

Swent: You can see the planting there.

Onstad: Yes, there was an old homestead there. There is supposedly a plaque under one of the walnut trees that talks about--they called

it the Hand Ranch. There was a man that ran hogs out here on that ranch, and they said he was the most successful farmer that ever farmed out in this area. And you can see traces of the old hog wire here. But he has a plaque under a tree that has the years of when he lived here. I have never seen it, but in the historical files in the Lakeport Museum there is a notation about that. A lot of old walnut trees were there, and there was a pear orchard. I used to can off of that old pear orchard! When we first came up here, I picked pears and canned. And a few of the trees are still left.

And then on the McIntyre ranch there was an old house on there, but whoever was grazing it at that time, the doors were left open, the cattle would go inside, and eventually the house was just beyond repair any more. The house was still on it, though. Parts of it were Homestake property.

So there's a lot of old history here.

Swent: Well, now, when you first started coming up, I guess the Knoxville building was still there.

Onstad: The Knoxville building was still there. I guess eventually the Gamble family thought it was a public nuisance. They were worried about liability, and they had it torn down. When Della Underwood was living there, that was still up. There were a lot of trailers in that area. I'm sure she can fill you in on all that.

Swent: There's really not much of a trace of anything now.

Onstad: No, no. You'd never know it was there now. There are some corrals there still.

Swent: Well, you've seen a lot of changes just in the short time you've been there.

Onstad: Yes. At the Reed¹ Mine, where the Davis Creek reservoir is, there are still some traces of houses there. And Jack Landman is an excellent one to talk to about that. The old post office was out here and a school. He can update you on those.

Swent: That's about it, I guess.

¹ Mrs. Onstad prefers the spelling "Reid," used in some Homestake reports and UCGS topographic maps, but on the advice of Homestake geologist and local historian Dean Enderlin, we have settled on "Reed."

Onstad: I think so.

Swent: Okay. Thank you very much.

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Ronald Parker

RESIDENT MANAGER OF THE McLAUGHLIN MINE, 1988 TO 1994

Interviews Conducted by
Eleanor Swent
in 1996

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Ronald Parker

Ronald Parker was the resident general manager of the McLaughlin Mine from 1988 to 1994, when he was transferred by Homestake to its Eskay Creek Mine in British Columbia, and became president of Homestake Canada. Although he was born in Boss, Missouri, site of a famed lead deposit, he had no connection with mining until after he had graduated from the university of Missouri as a mechanical engineer. He worked at numerous jobs through school and college, and then for the Delco-Moraine division of General Motors at a brake plant where he says he "got a pretty healthy dose of the environmental protection and regulation on emissions." He was in charge of ventilation systems, and succeeded in reducing asbestos in the air from an average of 15 fibers to .5 fibers per cubic centimeter.

From 1976 to 1986 Parker worked for Amax at the Buick, Missouri, lead smelter. He tells how he motivated men by promising them a better working environment. Once when he criticized a dirty bathroom and the man said it was not his job to clean it, Parker cleaned it himself and told him, "Next time it is your turn." He says after that, the bathroom was kept clean.

The Amax years also included a long and violent strike. Parker's father had been a steelworker who, according to his son, "could never understand why worker-management relations had to be conflicts." He says he learned from the Amax strike "that communication is just critical when you're trying to work with people."

Parker began work at the McLaughlin Mine, which he calls "the newest, most exciting mine in the United States" in 1986 as chief plant engineer; two years later he became general manager, with management skills including empathy for the worker and strong concern for safety as well as productivity. He continued the "round-table meetings" set up by his predecessor Jack Thompson and learned about the processing operations from John Turney. In his oral history he compares Homestake's management and organization with those of other companies, and discusses the challenge of harmonizing operations and maintenance.

The interview was conducted on 21 March 1996 in the Homestake home office at 650 California Street, San Francisco, when Parker was in town on business. We had hoped to conduct a further interview, but were unable to schedule it. The tapes of the interview were transcribed in the Regional Oral History Office and the lightly edited transcript was sent to Ronald Parker for review. He reviewed it thoroughly and returned it in January 1999 with several changes for clarification and a few explanatory inserts. The manuscript was corrected and indexed at our office. The tapes are deposited in The Bancroft Library and are available for study.

The Ronald Parker interview is one of more than forty interviews which were conducted by the Regional Oral History Office from 1993-1998 in order to document the development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Knoxville District of Lake, Napa, and Yolo Counties, California, from 1978-1998, as part of the ongoing oral history series devoted to Western Mining in the Twentieth Century. The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. The office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Eleanor Swent, Project Director, Research Interviewer/Editor
Regional Oral History Office

April 1999
The Bancroft Library
Berkeley, California

INTERVIEW WITH RONALD PARKER

RESIDENT MANAGER OF THE MCLAUGHLIN MINE, 1988 TO 1994

[Interview 1: March 21, 1996] ##¹

Growing Up in Downtown St. Louis, Missouri

Swent: Here we are in the Homestake offices, the main office at 650 California Street in San Francisco, and Ron Parker is here from Vancouver, Canada. Ron, you are now president of Homestake-Canada, and you were formerly the resident general manager of the McLaughlin Mine. We're going to talk about your early years in education and how you got to McLaughlin and what experience you had that came into play when you got to McLaughlin.

Let's just begin at the beginning, Ron, if you don't mind. Please tell where you were born and when.

Parker: I was born on May 25, 1950, in Boss, Missouri. That's near the lead belt in southern Missouri. Actually, I only stayed there for a few early months of my life before we moved to St. Louis; that is where I actually grew up.

Swent: Was your father involved in mining at all?

Parker: Not at all. My father was a steel worker and worked for American Can Company for about thirty-five years until he retired.

Swent: Boss was a famous lead mining district.

Parker: That's right. Several of my relatives actually worked in the lead mines, for primarily St. Joe Lead Company, at that time, and later for the Doe Run Company.

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Swent: So growing up in St. Louis, you grew up in a city, urban environment.

Parker: Grew up in the downtown part of St. Louis, actually, not too far from the projects, so right down among a very diverse group of people. The early years were always happy years in that setting. I attended elementary school close to home, and after the fourth grade I was placed in an advanced class, so actually I had to ride a bus to school after that. That was a bit traumatic because you left your friends around your house and had a whole new circle of friends.

Working Thirty-Five to Forty Hours a Week in High School

Parker: I worked mostly during high school--from a very early age, actually. When I went to my dad when I was fifteen and a half and junior prom was coming up, I asked Dad if I could use his car next year; twelve months in advance I asked him. And he told me that if I wanted a car, I'd better go out and get a job.

Swent: At fifteen.

Parker: Yes. So I took it to heart and started working at Steak and Shake, which was a fast food place. I worked three nights a week from about five in the evening until eleven o'clock at night. And then I worked the weekends as well, so by the time I was sixteen, I was able to buy my car.

Swent: And you kept your grades up, too?

Parker: Kept my grades up. And then I got a better job at United Parcel Service during high school, where I worked, actually, from two o'clock in the morning until seven in the morning. But it was a good job--and then sixteen hours on Saturday. So I was working about thirty-five to forty hours a week.

Swent: So how has this helped you later?

Parker: Well, I think what it did, it taught me the benefit of good, hard work and that you can accomplish several things with hard work. Not only could I keep my grades up, but I actually played sports during that time, too.

Swent: Oh, my!

Parker: So, keep my grades up, do the sports, and still be able to survive on a few hours sleep a night.

Working Two Full-time Jobs the Summer After High School

Parker: So after my senior year, getting ready for college that summer before I went to college, I worked eighty hours a week. I had two full-time jobs.

Swent: My heavens!

Parker: One at Century Electric Company. I was admitted to a co-op program through Century Electric. They made electric motors. It was a co-op program where I would go to school a semester, then work a semester. But I didn't want to give up my United Parcel job at that time, so I went to work at two in the morning, got off at seven. The Century Electric job started at eight, and I got off at five. That was about six days a week, those hours.

Swent: Oh, my!

Parker: But I saved enough money for college.

Swent: That's really impressive. Very, very impressive.

Parker: Actually, my parents always had enough money, but they never had an excess of money. We always had family vacations--camping and the boating on the lake and things like that--but they really didn't have the money saved up to allow me to go to college.

Swent: Did you have brothers and sisters?

Parker: I have an older brother and a younger brother. The older one graduated from high school and didn't attend college. My dad only had an eighth grade education, and Mom had one year of high school. Dad always said he attended high school. He said he went through the front door one day and went out the back door the same day.

Swent: So was this an aspiration of theirs for you?

Parker: I think it was. Even though they had limited education, they were always well read, and I still view them as very intelligent people.

Swent: Were they from Missouri?

Parker: They were from the rural part of Missouri, where education wasn't considered as important as it is today. Working on the farm was a lot more important, and they did hard work on the farm. So that's what they did in the early years. They were married at a very young age. Dad was seventeen; Mom was fifteen when they got married. And they're still married. They just had their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

Swent: It is like something from an earlier era, isn't it?

An Early Decision to Become a Mechanical Engineer

Parker: Yes. And the decision for me to go to college was actually made at a very young age. I can remember having discussions with an older cousin who was at Washington State University at the time, when I was probably in the seventh or eighth grade, and he asked me what I wanted to be, and I told him I wanted to be a mechanical engineer. I don't know why, but even at that age I think I knew what my career path would be, and never wavered. So I think I was very focused from very early on. And I think that's one of the reasons that I worked so hard in the early years, so that I could make sure that I could attend college and not be a burden on the parents. That, I think, was the biggest concern.

Swent: Were there teachers who inspired you?

Parker: The one I remember the most was my fourth grade teacher, believe it or not. And that was my last teacher before the advanced classes. I think she always motivated me to do more than I thought I could ever achieve, so probably her. She's the one that stands out in the mind, even among all the ones since. Her name was Ms. Sharman, the fourth grade teacher at Charless Elementary School in St. Louis.

Swent: Have you ever kept in touch with her?

Parker: No, I haven't.

Swent: She would certainly be proud of you now, wouldn't she?

Parker: Oh, yes, I think she would.

Swent: She would be thrilled, absolutely. That's wonderful.

Parker: She even gave me an A in singing, and that's the one I didn't deserve.

Swent: That's wonderful. I didn't realize that you had worked so very hard. And I would sense that maybe your skills with people came out of some of that, too. You obviously have a feeling for the laboring man.

Parker: I know it has helped. My jobs, during high school and even during my college career, were typically all union jobs. Even at United Parcel I was in the Teamsters Union. And later, when I worked at American Can, I was in the United Steel Workers Union, so I always had the union jobs. And obviously, with my dad being a steelworker for so many years, I got an early dose of the worker-management relations. At that time there were several management conflicts. Dad could never understand why it had to be that way, and I think that helped me.

Swent: In 1966 and 1967, when you were working at these jobs, what was the labor situation at that point?

Parker: Well, that's about the Jimmy Hoffa time period. Unions had a tendency to be fairly radical and violent, or could be violent.

Swent: Missouri wasn't reputed for its violence, but was there violence?

Parker: Perhaps later, when we get into the work history at AMAX--there was a bit of violence there.

Swent: Okay, we can talk about that. What high school did you go to?

Parker: I attended Cleveland High School and graduated from there in 1968.

Swent: Managing to get good grades.

Parker: Yes, I graduated from Cleveland with just over a B average.

Swent: That's amazing! Really. And sports, you said, as well.

Parker: Yes. Wrestling, at Cleveland.

Swent: So you kept your health up through all this, too.

Parker: Oh, yes. I spent a lot of time lifting weights at that time and running, so it's probably what kept me going.

Swent: And then you went on to college.

Parker: Yes, after I worked the summer, I started college in the fall of 1968 at the University of Missouri at Rolla. They had changed the name by then. Prior to that, in 1967, it was called the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy. About the time I transferred

there is the time they changed it to University of Missouri at Rolla.

Swent: Did you live at the university?

Parker: I lived off campus, actually, in the basement of a doctor's office, which was just perfect. All the activity left at the time that I needed to study. I lived there with five other people in three big rooms in the basement. Our meals were at an eating club, which was just a group of college people who got together and formed a club where we could eat. We hired a cook and set the menus and collected the payments.

Dishwasher to Business Manager of Student Eating Club

Parker: So I didn't work my first couple of years at college, other than summer, and then after that, the second year, I started washing dishes at the eating club for free meals. And then after that became business manager, where I ran the business of the club to get the free room and board.

Swent: How many people were involved in the club?

Parker: There were about 100 in the club at the peak, but it would run from probably 75-105 would be a range.

Swent: A pretty big enterprise.

Parker: Yes, a fairly large enterprise.

I started college in the fall and to be honest with you, it was the first time really away from home, away from adult supervision. And college has a tendency to be a bit hard on people, so my grades the first semester or so weren't the best-- C's and B's. But they were reasonable grades.

Swent: This was late sixties.

Parker: Yes, about the time of Kent State and Vietnam.

Swent: Some colleges were very turbulent then.

Parker: Yes, they were. But University of Missouri at Rolla was quite a conservative school. Drugs were just beginning at the college scene. You know, you could see a bit of the marijuana, but not much harder drugs than that.

Swent: You had the draft breathing down your neck.

Parker: I guess that's one of the ways to put it, until they drew the lottery numbers.

Swent: They had a draft lottery.

Parker: They had a draft lottery, and I didn't stay up for the lottery number draw because that was during the summer when I was working the eighty hours a week. I think the drawings were at eight or nine o'clock at night, and I had to get up at one a.m. to make my two a.m. start time, so I can remember the next morning stopping and buying the paper. And my lottery number was 361, which meant that I would be one of the last people ever to be called.

I can remember immediately going down to the draft office and changing my classification from my university classification to 1-A, to get my draft liability out of the way. But I was prepared to go. If my lottery number would have been low, I had already in my mind made the decision to join, or volunteer for the draft.

Swent: But you didn't have to.

Parker: I didn't have to, so I didn't.

Swent: What was your summer job then?

Working with the Century Electric Co-op Program

Parker: My summer jobs were at American Can Company in the beginning. Or, actually, I continued with the Century Electric co-op program. I completed my first year of university and then worked the next summer with Century Electric.

Swent: What was your job there?

Parker: They would call it an engineer-in-training position, so actually I was gaining engineering experience. Worked a summer there, and then went the next fall semester. And then the next spring I worked at Century Electric.

Swent: Again at Century?

Parker: At Century Electric. I determined at about that time that it was probably to my benefit to complete my schooling earlier, because

the co-op program would have meant I would have to continue my college for at least five years and maybe five and a half years if I continued in the program; working a semester and then going to school a semester. But actually, it allowed people like me to be able to afford college, so I worked that last semester for Century Electric and turned in my resignation and told them that I just wanted to complete it [my college education] a little quicker.

And then my summer jobs the next two summers were at American Can Company, where Dad worked.

Swent: This is where your father was.

Parker: Yes. The summer students received the lower paying jobs; although it paid very well.

Swent: Do you remember what you were getting paid at some of these jobs?

Parker: The Steak and Shake was a quarter an hour plus tips. [chuckling] But I was able to earn enough to buy a new car. The United Parcel Service job I think was \$3.75 an hour. It was actually fairly good pay for that time.

Swent: Were there any benefits?

Parker: Well, no. Even at thirty-five hours a week, it was still considered part-time employment. I don't know what the rule was, but--

Swent: So no benefits, but \$3.75 an hour. Did they provide uniforms?

Parker: Actually, it was in the distribution center, so I loaded the trucks in the beginning, loaded the boxes in the trucks or unloaded trucks. And then later I became a clerk. They did time studies at United Parcel Service so I actually did the clerking jobs, where I evaluated the number of packages the drivers delivered and how much time it took them to deliver and calculated an efficiency rating for them. That was my 2 a.m to 7 a.m. job, and that's why Saturday was sixteen hours, because you had to consolidate the whole week to give them a weekly rate. So that's how United Parcel Service could keep track of how productive their drivers were.

Swent: I've heard that they're really hard on the drivers. Is that true?

Parker: It was probably partly my fault! [chuckles] I'm sure that they would be responsible for their efficiency, and United Parcel kept a good measure of that.

At the American Can job I recall that the job paid more. At Century Electric, the job would have been minimum wage, which would have been right at \$2.00 an hour.

Swent: And no benefits.

Parker: And no benefits. And that's another reason for me to make the decision to leave Century Electric and try and get a better summer job. The summers at American Can were probably in the five dollar range plus, I would guess. And the last summer before I graduated I worked at General Motors in their St. Louis operation, at their Corvette plant as an engineer-in-training, between my junior and senior years. And that job paid up around \$8.00 an hour: a relatively good-paying job. So that was my last summer job.

Swent: And you had had your engineering studies, too.

Parker: I was pretty far along by that time.

Swent: Mechanical engineering was your major?

Parker: Mechanical engineering was my major. My college grades were good. My grades the first year were C's and B's, but they got better the second year--a bit more studying and a bit less partying.

Merrily Clarice Glotfelty Causes Grades to Shoot Up Dramatically

Parker: And by the time the third year rolled around, I met Merrily, who is now my wife. And the grades shot up dramatically after that, yes.

Swent: How do you spell Merrily?

Parker: M-E-R-R-I-L-Y. Just like the adverb.

Swent: Did you meet her there at the university?

Parker: No, actually, I met her on a blind date. She was attending Southwest Baptist College near Springfield, Missouri. And it was a blind date. She'll never forgive me, but I need to remember when I met her. No, actually, I can back-calculate it. We got married in 1972, in January, and we were engaged for a year and dated for about a year, so I met her in 1970--in the spring of 1970. April 13 of 1970, actually.

Swent: Oh, your anniversary is coming up.

Parker: Yes. [chuckles]

Swent: This was your junior year?

Parker: That probably would have been my sophomore year. The spring of '69 would have still been my freshman year, so the spring of '70 would have been my sophomore year, toward the end of my sophomore year.

Swent: So you were married before you finished college?

Parker: Yes. We got married eight months before we finished.

Swent: Had she finished?

Parker: We started college at the same time, dated for eight months, and then got engaged. And then at that time she transferred to the University of Missouri at Rolla and she finished her degree there, her psychology degree. She actually completed her college in three years--three and a half, I think. And it took me four and a half because of my early Century Electric experience. So, yes, we got married in January of 1972, and I graduated in August of '72, so eight months before we graduated.

Swent: But your grades shot up when Merrily came on the scene.

Parker: Oh, yes, yes. Actually, really shot up after we got married.
[laughs]

Swent: Well, that's nice. She has taught since then, much of the time, hasn't she?

Parker: Yes. I guess that takes us right through to the graduation.

Some of the things I did during college: I was involved in several of the organizations on campus, the service organizations, and also was business manager of the Prospectors Club, so I think that gave me a well-rounded college career.

Swent: What was the Prospectors Club?

Parker: That was the eating club.

Learning Labor Management as Plant Engineer for General Motors,
1972-1976

Parker: And after I graduated--actually, before I graduated--were the interviews. Interview with companies and decide where you were going to end up. I received five firm job offers, I remember, and finally decided on General Motors in Dayton, Ohio.

Swent: You had worked for them in St. Louis.

Parker: I had worked for General Motors in St. Louis, but the interview team was a different team. Actually, the three jobs I considered: one was at Three Mile Island for Bechtel--it was the team that was building the nuclear power plant at that time; an offer from FMC in Arkansas; and General Motors in Dayton, Ohio; and Union Electric, just outside of St. Louis are the four that I remember. But decided on General Motors in Dayton, Ohio.

Swent: What made you decide that?

Parker: Well, I think it's just the lure of the automotive industry at that time. It seemed to make sense for a mechanical engineer to do that. I was hired to work in their plant engineering department. We took care of things like exhaust ventilation and plant layout for the manufacturing facility.

Swent: The environmental concerns were just beginning to be very strong then.

Parker: The General Motors plant I went to was Delco-Moraine.

Swent: In Dayton.

Parker: Yes. That was the brake plant. Asbestos was the raw material used, so got a pretty healthy dose of the environmental protection and regulation on emissions. Actually, with my background as a mechanical engineer and some courses that General Motors sent me to, I was in charge of their ventilation systems, the ones that protected their people at the plants. I took the job very seriously. Actually, the asbestos in the air when I went there would average close to fifteen fibers per cubic centimeter. By the time I left four years later, we got it down to an average of .5 fibers per cubic centimeter, so we made several improvements over the four years.

Swent: This is in the plant.

Parker: Inside the plant, with ventilation systems and protection systems for the employees. So it was a pretty good reduction in hazardous emissions.

Swent: What was the corporate attitude toward this, or did you have any sense of that?

Parker: I was probably too far down on the food chain to be able to detect whether or not there was a real sense of moral obligation or legal obligation.

Swent: But anyway, you were assigned the task.

Parker: Having said that, I had a lot of freedom to do what I felt was right. And I can't ever remember getting constrained because of money, which tells me either I presented good projects or there was a real sense of obligation. Obviously, the regulations were forcing us to get it down as well.

Learning the Lesson of the Power of the Working Person

Swent: But your concern for the working man would motivate you as well.

Parker: Delco-Moraine was a union operation: the Auto Workers. And actually it's the ones on strike today for General Motors. It's southern Ohio that has the whole United States shut down today, and most of Canada as well.

Swent: Right. They've had a long-lasting strike there.

Parker: They had a relatively strong union at that time, but in the job I was in there, you had to build a close working relationship with the hourly person because whatever system we put in they had to work with. So I would find myself spending some time with cardboard and razor blades to actually cut out exactly what a hood would look like over a work area that they were at and take it out and allow them to help me modify it, so it was a very proactive process. Then, when you finally did install it, it was something that they had a part of. Automatically you got buy-in, so it worked out very well.

Swent: That sounds like something that you used later.

##

Parker: I guess it was just an early sense of the power of the working person. Still, today, I don't think you'll get the job done if everybody in the plant isn't behind it. You can't drive anything from the top, I'm convinced. It only lasts for a little while. And if you can't convince the work force that it's a good idea, then it will never last. So if that's one lesson you learn, that's probably the best one to learn.

Swent: I'm sure it is.

Parker: So I left Delco-Moraine in 1976.

Swent: Why did you leave?

Parker: Couple of reasons. Number one, I couldn't see a way to advance. I knew at that time--and I was in a staff engineering job, and the way to advance in General Motors was through the operations side. And the ability for someone like me to get into operations was limited, because I think they saw the value of what I was doing. Number one, I don't think they would let me get out there, even though I requested it. And number two, I think they preferred the General Motors Institute people over the outside people. They had their own university system. So it was hard to break those ranks.

I think I probably could, over time. Now, I told you that, and that's the reason I tell everybody I left. But probably the real reason was to get back home. I wanted to get back a bit closer to the relatives and to the wife's relatives.

Swent: She was also from Missouri?

Parker: She was an "army brat", so they moved all over the place.

Swent: I'm hoping to interview her.

Parker: Her parents were in Missouri at the time. Her dad is actually a psychiatrist, and he works for the civil service and went from federal prison to federal prison--Ohio, Kansas, Missouri.

Project Engineering and Construction at AMAX Lead Smelter, 1976-1979

Swent: But you wanted to get back home.

Parker: Yes, I wanted to get back home. So I sent out several resumes. AMAX Lead Company called me for an interview. AMAX Lead is

located near Boss, Missouri, the town where I was born. I went there and interviewed with Harvey Rowland, who was the chief engineer. The job was a project engineering job, similar to the job that I did for General Motors. And it was a lead smelter, so moving from asbestos to lead was a similar move. I couldn't get out of the hazardous materials there for a while.

Swent: Some of the same challenges?

Parker: Some of the same challenges with the plant ventilation. Harvey and I hit it off very well, and I decided to accept the job offer to move back to Missouri. It was a little bit less pay and considerably less pay when I consider that AMAX didn't pay for overtime but General Motors did, but it was worth it to get back home.

Swent: Were they expanding at that time?

Parker: They were always in a state of change at the lead smelter: making improvements in the operation, capital improvements, to be more efficient and more effective. So they were expanding, but it was a fairly mature plant. It had been operating since 1965, and I went there in 1976, so it had already been operating for eleven years.

I was in the project engineering department. We would average probably eight to twelve million dollars' worth of capital projects per year that would run through our engineering department. The plant name was the Buick smelter. I was in charge for a portion of those projects. Harvey Rowland had several engineers who worked for him--three at that time, I think.

Swent: Who were they?

Parker: Harvey Rowland, Dick Jacobson, and James Prall.

Swent: You were the third.

Parker: I was the third, yes. My job became involved not only on the engineering of the projects, but also the construction inside the plant. We would average between, oh, a low of thirty contractors or construction personnel up to a high of maybe 120.

Swent: And this was all done in-house?

Parker: In-house. The construction management was primarily in-house, watching after the contractors. They were mostly on a time-and-materials contract, so you had to monitor the project, monitor the

work, to make sure that the work was done efficiently with the least number of people possible. That lasted for several years.

Swent: This was only the smelter. You were not concerned with the mine?

Plant Engineer, 1979-1981

Parker: Not at all with the mine. Only during the strike. And we'll get to that in a bit. But I held that job for a few years, until 1979, and then I became the plant engineer. All of the engineers then worked for me, and I reported directly to the chief engineer at that time, who was Ralph Cundall. Harvey Rowland left, and Ralph came in during that time.

Swent: Why were you selected as plant engineer?

Parker: Probably the right person at the right time.

Swent: In what sense?

Parker: By that time, Jim Prall was nearing retirement age. Jim Minster was a new mechanical engineer just brought on board. I was the most senior and the best qualified person to take over that position. There were several new projects at that time. We put in a new electric furnace for the smelter several million dollars' worth. I can't quite remember, but probably ten to twelve million dollars' worth. And a new crushing facility at the same time that was just over four million dollars. We had quite a few contractors on the payroll.

Transferring to Operations as Shift Boss, 1981

Parker: Toward the end of my tenure as plant engineer--and I can't remember whether it was late '80 or early '81--I went to the smelter manager, who was Steve Mueller at that time, and told Steve that I had a strong desire to get into operations. Again, it was the situation that to advance in the ranks, operating experience was necessary. I knew I couldn't advance if I didn't get the operating experience. I thought it was necessary. So I remember Steve asking me, "What kind of job do you want in operations?"

I said, "Well, to be honest with you, I think shift boss is probably where I ought to start," which is the lowest ranking person in operations.

I can remember him saying, "You mean, you'd move from plant engineer, which is a relatively high position, to a shift boss?"

I said yes, so Steve made arrangements in 1981 to get me out as a shift boss.

Swent: Was this in the mine, then?

Parker: That was in the smelter. My total career at AMAX was in the smelter.

Swent: Was there any mentor giving you advice at this point, clueing you in on this, or did you just sense it?

Parker: I just sensed it. You could see both at General Motors and at the Buick smelter that the advancement was through the operating side. Those were the groups that made the difference, and those were the groups that were involved in the decisions that made the difference. And I felt that I could make a difference, so I became a shift boss.

It was a temporary position. They developed a position totally for me. They called it a trainee position. I worked what they called the seven-day rotation shift, which meant seven days of days, a couple of days off, seven days of evenings, one day off, seven days of midnights, then four days off. Pretty rough schedule. I worked there for about a year.

Swent: Did you have your family then?

Parker: Yes, we had a family. Actually, it wasn't a bad shift for the family. The evening shift was the toughest one because you didn't get to see the girls. In '81, Heather would have already been in school, and Holly would have been just starting kindergarten, so the evening shift was the toughest shift. I could still see Merrily, but I couldn't see the girls. But midnights was fine because I'd work the midnight shift and get home at seven and do some things around the house or cut some wood and get to bed about noon, and by the time the girls came home at four or five, I was ready to get up. So that worked out very good. And then I wouldn't have to go to work until ten o'clock or so, and the girls would be in bed, so midnights worked out very well for me.

Swent: It sounds as if you get along on not much sleep. Or for many years you did, anyway.

Parker: I need a little more now. I take a little more now.

Swent: So this was a cut in pay, I presume, also, wasn't it?

Parker: No, actually, they kept my same pay. They did do that. Although I expected a cut in pay, I was happy when there wasn't.

A Difficult Foreman's Job, 1982

Parker: After about a year, in 1982 I was offered the general foreman position at the sinter plant at the Buick smelter. I might mention that the Buick smelter was unionized with the Steel Workers Union. At the time I was there, it was a very unified group of people--lots of wildcat strikes, lots of union activity. We just didn't communicate very well between management and the union, and it caused a lot of labor unrest. Both parties were at fault, obviously. Past management just wasn't able to get the two groups together.

When I was promoted, I took over from a person who had been general foreman there since 1965. He got demoted, and I got promoted.

Swent: It sounds like a difficult spot to step into.

Parker: Yes, because he remained on the property. Although it became a good relationship in the long term, it was certainly tenuous in the beginning, and not only from the standpoint of that particular person, because I was the engineer that got promoted, and I was the only engineer in the the general foremen position at the smelter, and there were four of them. The peer relationship wasn't the best with the other general foremen because the person who worked for ten or twelve or fifteen years got demoted, so who was next was the worry.

Swent: I don't understand how there can be four general foremen. I assumed there would be just one.

Parker: Well, the smelter was comprised of four main departments: sinter acid plant was one, blast furnace was the second, refinery was the third, and then what we called the yard and plant services was the fourth department. There was a general foreman in charge of each of the departments. They were actually the department heads. In some other operations they'd be called superintendents, perhaps.

Swent: And you were in charge of the sinter acid plant.

Parker: Yes, I was one of four that reported to an operating superintendent.

Personnel Relations a Challenge

Swent: What were the particular challenges? You mentioned the personnel one.

Parker: Well, the personnel was a challenge. The day I took over, they transferred the best maintenance foreman, worked in the sinter acid plant, which was good. I was quite happy to take over that department because I had the best to start with. But the day I took over, they replaced that person with the perceived worst foreman in the smelter.

Swent: Who is "they"?

Parker: Well, the other general foremen convinced management to make that switch, so that was a double challenge. I not only had the challenge of taking over a department that had been managed by one person for fifteen years, and that person remained on the property, but also the challenge of having probably the weakest maintenance support person there. Other challenges: it was a department that had too many people. It was just overstaffed. Too many people to do the job. And hygiene was terrible, and housekeeping was pathetic.

Causing a Turnaround in Maintenance

Parker: But having said all of that, it was just an opportunity to make a lot of improvements in a short period of time. I can remember several discussions early on. I spent a lot of time with the maintenance group. The first thing I did was bring in the maintenance person in the office. We sat down and had a nice little chat. I told him that we had a problem, and the problem was that, "I really don't know what I'm doing as the general foreman, and that ought to be a real concern to you, because I haven't been one before. And number two, you don't have the best record in the world as a maintenance supervisor. So the only way that I can see us both surviving is that we support each other." We just made a bond on that day, and I'm convinced that our department was the best department in the smelter, and that

particular person became the best maintenance supervisor in the plant.

Swent: Really!

Parker: Yes, so it was quite a turnaround all the way around.

Swent: What an exciting development.

Parker: And the situation in the plant had an excellent turnaround as well. But I guess that's where I learned to manage by walking around. After I became general foreman, I would get to work between four and five o'clock in the morning. Typically, the other general foremen would get there about six-thirty or seven o'clock, but that time that I had between four and five, I started walking around the plant and telling the people what I expected or what I wanted to see. Not only that, telling them what I would do if I saw it.

For instance, the sinter plant office was just terrible. It was filthy, and there was dirt on the floor and piles of stuff in the corner, and no paint, and graffiti all over the walls--just a terrible place to work, a terrible place to have meetings; even a worse place to take a break when you tried to get out of the atmosphere. So I told the people what I would do if they'd keep it clean for a week: I would put quarry tile on the floor. So they kept it clean for a week, and we did that and made other commitments and actually put white paneling on the wall. The white was a signal that we'd always keep it clean. And they did. And they became proud of it. And that was just the beginning.

I remember one time I walked in and the sinter machine operator was--it was his job to keep the work area clean. I walked in and I said, "The rest room is dirty. It hasn't been cleaned." There are several things sacred to people. One was keeping that area clean.

And he said, "Well, that's not my job."

I said, "Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll clean it." And I walked in and cleaned it. And I said, "Next time it's your job. If I can clean it, you can clean it." It stayed clean after that.

But that's one advantage of walking around early. I not only walked around early. I saw the third shift and spoke to the people there, spent the day with them. But I'd also stay in the evening and be able to pick up the evening shift, so each shift

could see me each day. I made the effort to do that, and there was a dramatic improvement in the plant.

Controlling Hazardous Emissions at the Sintering Plant

Swent: What does the sinter plant do exactly?

Parker: We take the raw concentrate from the mine. The sintering process is a process where you ignite the concentrate, then you burn the sulfide off. You make sulfur dioxide. Then we would send that to our acid plant, where we would make sulfuric acid out of the material. The product we would get after we burned the sulfur out of the concentrate is a hard, softball-sized piece of material which we could send to the blast furnace, where we would further process it and make elemental lead and recover a bit of silver and copper out of it as well.

Swent: So this was also a furnace?

Parker: No, the sintering plant was only to make the product to ship to the blast furnace. It was a traveling grate that was about ten feet wide and about eighty feet long. You would apply a two-inch layer of concentrate on it and ignite it with a flame. The sulfur in the ore would provide the heat source. It's an exothermic reaction that provided the heat source. On top of that two-inch material we would put another ten inches of raw concentrate and then blow air up through it, to make the fire go up or the reaction go up throughout the bed.

Swent: This, then, is traveling along this eighty feet.

Parker: It travels along the eighty feet and then just falls off the end, and hopefully it's completely cooked through by the time you get to the end, and the sulfur is driven off. You want to drive the sulfur off here before you take it to the blast furnace.

Swent: Were there emission problems?

Parker: We had exhaust gas recovery off the sintering machine that took the SO_2 gas to our acid plant, and we converted the SO_2 to sulfuric acid.

Swent: Were there health issues there at the plant?

Parker: Certainly. Probably the biggest lead and SO_2 emissions source at the smelter was from the sintering plant. It's the SO_2 emissions

that you have to worry about. The air emissions would come from the sintering operation, and we were under legal obligation at the smelter to limit the amount of SO₂ gas. We had monitoring stations around the perimeter of the plant. Those were continuous monitors. If we exceeded or got close to exceeding the SO₂ standard, we actually would shut the sintering plant down. That was one of the measures of performance, how well you kept your acid plant running to limit the amount of SO₂ that you could allow to escape.

Swent: Lead was not a problem there?

Parker: Lead was also a problem, but the SO₂ was the biggest air emission problem that we had. Now, certainly the lead and the employee exposure to lead was a severe problem. We went seven years in the sinter acid plant with no high lead exposure of employees. We had good hygiene programs, good administrative programs. Respirator wear we took very seriously.

Swent: All the workers wore respirators?

Parker: Wore respirators, yes, 100 percent of the time, unless you were in a controlled atmosphere area.

Swent: You had to as well.

Parker: I had to as well, yes.

Swent: Nobody likes that.

Parker: Nobody likes it, but actually you get used to it. It's just second nature that you wear it.

A Long and Violent Strike in 1984

Swent: But it's important to get people's cooperation, of course.

Parker: Yes. Probably the biggest lessons learned as we went on through the--shortly after I took over as general foreman, and I think it was 1984, or a couple of years afterwards, we had a major strike at the operation. We were on strike for about six months. Not only we were on strike but St. Joe Lead Company was on strike as well. It got pretty violent at that time. Several barns burned, private barns. Several instances of truck drivers' windows being shot while they were driving. Lots of rock throwing at the truck drivers. We tried to run the operations during the strike.

Swent: Using supervisors?

Parker: Using supervisors and actually brought in other AMAX people from other sites--Port Nickel, the Henderson Mine. And I remember the day the strike started. I was the first one at the operation, a typical 4:30-in-the-morning kind of guy, and drove in; and probably 150 people were blocking the entrance to the site.

Swent: At 4:30 in the morning?

Parker: At 4:30 in the morning. Yes, they had gathered a big crowd and surrounded my car. Several of them recognized me and said, "He's okay. Let him pass." So I got through and made the call to the human resources person to inform him of the situation. When we started bringing in the people from the outside, the violence started picking up.

Swent: Henderson is in Colorado.

Parker: Yes.

Swent: Where is Port Nickel?

Parker: Louisiana.

Swent: So they brought them in from--

Parker: From all over. Whichever AMAX sites had people that could be utilized, we brought them in. We ran the smelter with salaried people, ran the mine with salaried people. It got so bad just a few weeks into the strike, I came in one morning and there were security guards on the change house roof with AK-47s, walking around. So when you drive up, you want to whistle real loud as you're walking to work, to let people know you were coming. So it was a bit disturbing. Several of the staff people were carrying guns to work.

Swent: Did you?

Parker: No. To be honest with you, I thought about it, and I actually took one out. And then I asked myself the question, "Are you really ready to use this?" And I said, "No, I wouldn't use it, so you might as well not carry it." So I put it back up. My brother at that time was in the union at St. Joe Lead, so he was on the other side, my younger brother, so I got several of the stories from him. Actually, the union members were out in the woods with the high-powered rifles, scoping people with safeties off, so it got very close to some very serious incidents. We were just lucky

it didn't end up in any deaths, I think. It could have gotten very violent very quickly.

Swent: I don't understand. Scoping people. Were they--

Parker: Oh, they had the high-powered rifles with the scopes on them, and they actually had the cross-hairs on people.

Swent: What would provoke them to fire?

Parker: He said that there were people on one side saying, "Shoot," and people on the other side saying, "Don't shoot. Don't be crazy. Don't shoot." It's just the person who's got his finger on the trigger deciding whether or not to do it.

Swent: Just because someone was from the other side?

Parker: Oh, yes. It was really a management-versus-union kind of a thing.

Swent: Was there any estrangement between you and your brother?

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Swent: We're talking about the strike of 1984.

Parker: And you could see it in the schools. Merrily told me that you could see the division between the union and the management. That's where it was probably the most disturbing, that the children were alienated among themselves. So the strike continued. Got more and more violent.

I learned several lessons, I think: that communication is just critical whenever you're trying to work with people. That's one thing that we didn't do very well in the past. But I also learned some other very good lessons while we were operating the smelter: we found out that we could have very efficient operations with a lot fewer people than we ever had before, so that also was a very valuable lesson.

During the strike--just another interesting tidbit--we were running out of feed for the smelter because the mine wasn't able to keep up, so we decided to send the people who were working in the smelter down to the mine, except for the senior staff at the smelter. Well, of course, as general foreman, I volunteered to go down to the mine to try and pick up some mining experiences as well. So I went down there for about two months and drove a truck underground and loaded rounds and high-scaled and did all of the things that the miners did. Very interesting.

Swent: This was your first experience at mining?

Parker: First experience underground, yes. So the strike was settled, and the union returned. That was good, as far as I was concerned. But we made several reductions when the union came back. For instance, in the sinter acid plant we went from forty-eight people down to thirty-two or thirty-four people.

Swent: That's a big reduction.

Parker: A big drop-off in the number of people.

Swent: Was this voluntary attrition? People that just didn't come back? Or people that you actually refused to--

Parker: Actually, there were some actual reductions in force, but for the most part it was just people had found other work during the six months. We were able to make a lot of efficiency improvements at the smelter and reduce the number of people that we had.

Smelter Operations Superintendent and Merging to Doe Run

Parker: We had a lot better relations with the union. We made a concerted effort to do a better job. About that time, I was promoted to smelter superintendent, where I was in charge of all of the operating foremen, or the general foremen, and I had all of the operations at the Buick smelter. I was operating superintendent for about a year, until the operations--Homestake--sold their portion to St. Joe Lead Company. Actually, they bought the AMAX portion, and they sold all of it to St. Joe Lead and actually merged the two companies.

Swent: It was called AMAX. Or you referred to it as AMAX.

Parker: It was 50 percent owned by Homestake Mining Company. AMAX sold their portion to Homestake Mining Company, and I can't quite remember what year that was or what time that was. And then toward the end of my career there, Homestake merged the two companies, St. Joe Lead Company and the Homestake operation at that time, into the Doe Run Company.

I do remember that time because when that merger took place, we basically laid off all of the people at the smelter and the mine and shut down the operation and started up again later, after the merger.

Swent: With the same union?

Parker: No. We started it up non-union.

Swent: So you were getting acquainted with the Homestake people, were you?

Parker: Yes. That was a tough time because we actually went from the total employment, which at that time would have been six or seven hundred people, down to thirty-five.

Swent: From 600 to thirty-five?!

Parker: Yes. Well, it was a total layoff, total decision to shut everything down.

Swent: Now, you're speaking of mine and--

Parker: Mine and smelter, yes. So we did that. I remember the personnel from Homestake coming out and giving a bit of a pep talk. "You're the people that we really want to keep," to the thirty-five, "so we want to keep you long-term. That's why you're still on the payroll." But it was still a bit of a disappointment at that time.

Shortly after that, that's when I moved out to California.

Swent: What do you mean by disappointment?

Parker: Well, because the operation was going very well then. We had made a lot of efficiency improvements in the operation and were able to produce lead probably as low as anybody in the district, in the whole lead belt district there. And to see just the total layoff was hard, hard. But it's decisions companies have to make.

Swent: So you had been employed by AMAX, and then--

Parker: Then Homestake bought AMAX out. It transferred my employment from AMAX to Homestake and my seniority as well.

Swent: Okay. You could transfer seniority and retirement benefits? Those things, did they transfer?

Parker: Yes, but then Doe Run basically didn't take any of the remaining thirty-five. Very few of those remained with Doe Run. Probably ten out of the thirty-five finally ended up remaining. It wasn't the cordial merger that sometimes happens between two companies. It was really a one-sided merger.

Swent: What do you mean?

Parker: Well, one-sided means that one company wins and the other company loses. The people, I'm talking about. Sometimes a merger happens, like Homestake and Corona, where I think they both won, that there was really a cross-pollination of the people between the two operations. With the Homestake-St. Joe, I think only St. Joe came out on top, so therefore they didn't improve the operation. My opinion is you take the best people from both organizations, and you have a better organization. It didn't happen that way.

McLaughlin, the Newest, Most Exciting Mine in the U.S.

Swent: So what options did you have?

Parker: Actually, about that time, Bill Humphrey¹ talked to me. He told me that there was an opportunity in California at the McLaughlin Mine. And I remember very distinctly Bill saying, "If you want to work for a mining company, you might as well be in gold." And it was good advice. Bill gave me good advice. So I came out to McLaughlin for an interview during the summer of 1986.

Swent: Who interviewed you?

Parker: Jay Wilkes, the HR person, met me, and I interviewed only with Joe Young at the plant. The job available was the chief plant engineer, a new position for the operation. We had just started up McLaughlin in 1985, in the spring of 1985, so we had about a year under our belts. The operation was just ramping up its tonnage and not quite there yet, so had some startup issues to take care of. Not unusual in a plant the size of McLaughlin to have a twelve-month or eighteen-month startup period. I think that's very common in a plant the size of McLaughlin.

So I interviewed for chief plant engineer. It was interesting. I got to the plant about eight o'clock in the morning.

Swent: How did you get there?

¹ William A. Humphrey, "Mining Operations and Engineering Executive for Anaconda, Newmont, Homestake, 1950 to 1995," Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1996.

Parker: To McLaughlin? Well, I drove up the night before. So Jay met me in the morning and took me up to the plant site at eight. And I met with Joe Young. It was about a two-hour interview. And Joe took me back down the hill. It was the quickest interview I've ever had in my life. This interview is taking a longer time. So I think I knew at that time that Bill had made arrangements for me to come out, rather than Joe wanting me to come out. So Joe took me back down to the hotel.

Swent: At Clearlake?

Parker: Yes, in Clearlake. Joe and I were chatting, and I received a telephone call there, in the lounge. It was Jack Thompson.

Swent: Where was he?

Parker: He was out at the plant. And he said, "If you'll stay there for fifteen minutes, I need to talk to you just a little bit." Because I hadn't met Jack. I think he was disappointed that I got away without interviewing with him. So Jack came down, and we had a good interview and hit it off very well and later I received a job offer to--

Swent: Did you think that Joe was trying to keep you from meeting Jack?

Parker: I'd rather not read too much into it. I'm not sure. I'm not sure. Joe was a very quiet person.

Swent: I don't know him.

Parker: It was very odd. Jack and I hit it off, and [I] received a job offer and accepted the job and moved out, and Merrily followed me a few weeks later.

That would have been about August of 1986, I think, so late summer. Perfect time to move, just before school starts, so the timing was perfect for the family.

Swent: Was it a big decision to leave Missouri?

Parker: Oh, sure, because I had gone back to Missouri to be close to the family. And it was a hard decision, yes, but I didn't feel the opportunities there were all that great, and I knew I would have to move on anyway, and why not move to the newest, most exciting mine in the United States?

Swent: It was. It's hard to go back now and recapture that excitement, but I hope that we can get some of that sense of how exciting it was.

Parker: Oh, there was excitement. It was just an enormous project, to be quite honest with you. I was in awe when I walked around and got the first glimpse of it.

Swent: Yes. Everybody was so excited about it.

Parker: Well, that's right, so we moved to California. And right off the bat--I mean, it was just lots of hard work. You could see the intensity of the people to try and get the plant up to production standard. We were almost at that point, Lee, after twelve months, there was a bit of searching for the guilty--of why the plant wasn't fully up to production. So we tried to put that behind us very quickly.

Startup Problems as Plant Engineer, 1986

Swent: What were some of the startup problems that came up?

Parker: Oh, flows. Getting the autoclaves up and running to full capacity. The issues--when I got there we were still bypassing material around the autoclaves, so we weren't able to keep them fully loaded or get all of the material through the autoclaves. Those issues.

Improving Availability of the Autoclaves

Swent: There's a term that comes up often: autoclave availability. Could you tell me what that means?

Parker: Well, I guess that's the mechanical engineer in me. I wrote the drafts of most of these early annual reports. Let me take you back to the Buick smelter quickly, to when I took over the sinter plant. Availability is just how many hours a day does that machine run in comparison to the total hours it's available to run in a day. When I took over the sinter plant operation, we were averaging about 70 percent availability, which means 70 percent of the hours during the day, during the twenty-four hours, the sinter machine would run seventeen hours and it would be shut down for seven hours, and that would give you the 70 percent availability.

Swent: Is 70 percent good or bad?

Parker: Well, it wasn't good because the sinter machine was the bottleneck of the operation at the smelter. We improved the availability through good maintenance practice, getting the equipment up, in shape, get the availability up between 85 percent and 90 percent on the sinter machine. We were able to improve the productivity, improve the tons we could get through, and make the blast furnace the bottleneck, which took some of the pressure off the sinter acid plant. That's how I define availability.

Swent: You never achieve 100 percent, of course.

Parker: So we went to McLaughlin and the design availability on the autoclaves was 85 percent. The feasibility studies assumed that we could get 85 percent availability and that we could treat 300 tons per day through them. I think when I got there in the summer of 1986 we were in the mid-60s on the autoclaves, so it was running about two-thirds of the time, which wasn't bad. It was a brand-new device, never used before in the gold industry, and really it was remarkable achievement, I think, to have it to 65 percent. By the time I left and most recently, we are achieving around 92 percent availability, so it's only down about 8 percent of the time.

Swent: I think it was 95 percent one year, they reported.

Parker: Yes, that's very good. Excellent. Much better than we ever expected in the feasibility, which just means that we did our maintenance right, our preventative maintenance, and we kept the equipment up to top standards, and we tackled those problems very quickly that caused us to lose time. And the key to improving availability--I mean, the only way to improve it is to know what's causing you to shut it down, so record-keeping is critical.

If a shortage of feed material is one of the reasons you're shutting it down, you solve your feed problems. If you can't take the material that it's putting out, that's a different issue. If you're losing it because the inlet pipes are wearing out, you have to shut down to replace them. Those things are going to happen, but you design your pipes where you can change them quickly so if you lose one, not only do you have one made up but you have one right in the location there. So if you get a hole in one, you shut the machine down, you unbolt it, you move the new one in, you bolt it up, you go repair the old one, and get it put right back up there. Those are the things you do over and over again to improve your ability to get tonnage through a device, whatever device that is.

Swent: Are those the problems that you had?

Parker: Those are the problems. Availability was low on the autoclaves. We couldn't get material through the pipes--so we had to change some pumps. We had to make some pipes bigger. We made some improvements in the grinding circuit to get more tons up the pipeline. We put in some additional crushing capacity in the grinding circuit. Spillage was a problem in the beginning, so we improved our belt scrapers and our skirt boards on the conveyors to reduce the spillage to cut down on our downtime. So you tackled the problems that caused you the most problems.

And we had quite a team. It was a remarkable team at that time that could organize their thoughts, organize the logic, and tackle the problems in order of how we needed to tackle them. On that team was Pat Purtell, also a mechanical engineer.

Swent: I will be interviewing Pat down the line, too.

Parker: John Turney.

Swent: I have interviewed him.

Parker: John was critical to the early startup team at McLaughlin. By the time I got there, the maintenance person was Ivan Markland, who gave us the support to help install some of the equipment that we designed. And from TIC, who is a construction firm, it was Doug Booth, who was the superintendent there. The responsibility fell on his shoulders to install a lot of the equipment and projects.

Swent: Was TIC still there on site?

Parker: TIC was still on site at that time. And still remains on site as far as I know.

Swent: Oh, really?

Parker: They still have ten or fifteen people. Doug Booth would be an excellent person to talk to.

Swent: I didn't realize they were still--

Parker: Yes.

Swent: On a contract, too.

Parker: He has about ten people there now, maybe fifteen. They just supplement the maintenance work and/or new project work. That was the early years at McLaughlin.

Homestake's Concern for the Environment, Health, and Safety

Parker: I mean, the things that you saw immediately was the attention that we paid to the environment. That was just a breath of fresh air for me, literally. And I don't mean that as a pun.

Swent: How was this expressed to you? How were you made aware of it? Or how did you become aware of it?

Parker: It started at the top, with Jack Thompson and then it was just pervasive through the organization. But certainly in the beginning the two people who pushed it the hardest were Jack Thompson and Ray Krauss, obviously. I guess that's where I got the feel for it, that it was okay to care about the environment. Matter of fact, it wasn't just okay, it was part of the job. I'm an environmentalist. I think we're only stewards of this land for a short period of time, and we ought to take care of it. My daughter will be getting her degree in wildlife management, which really makes me proud. So I think that's one thing that impressed me.

I really got the feeling that they cared about people, and "they" means not only the top management but all of the management at McLaughlin, that we weren't afraid to tackle the people issues when there were issues that needed to be tackled. But that we actually cared what happened to people in the longer run, I got that feeling, and I hope that continues there as a legacy at that operation.

But several things were important to me. My philosophy consisted of four key parts. Number one, health and safety of the employees and environmental excellence had to be top of the list. If we couldn't do it safely, I told people not to do it, to shut it down, that we needed to take care of the safety issue first. And personally I'd seen people on crane booms, walking out on them, and I'd stop the truck and walk over to them and ask them what they were doing. I told them to get down and get a ladder and get a rope to tie themselves on, that the job wasn't important enough to take a chance. But you've got to be willing to do that. And you've got to be willing to follow up on that.

Swent: Right. And this was different from your previous experience?

Parker: Well, probably didn't have a responsible--probably too new to the position to make safety a top priority. Or a weakness in my early career. I probably wasn't mentored well in the beginning.

Swent: Of course, this was a newer organization as well as a new situation.

Parker: A new situation, but experienced people. Then, when I became general manager, it was easy to take the plunge and simply, I think, a couple of things are very important for a general manager: to very clearly state where you stand on things, have high expectations, and let the people know what those expectations are. And I guess that's what I'm saying when I say these four parts of my philosophy. Health and safety and the environment. That you've got to do it safely and you have to do it environmentally sound or you don't do it. Number one. Number one.

Be productive. That it's up to us to--the company pays you for eight hours a day, and they should expect eight hours of work out of people. We shouldn't expect any less, and people shouldn't give any less. Continuous improvement. We can always, always be better the next day. That there's always something we're doing that can be improved on, and let's always look for ways to make that improvement and be better than we are. And that's improvement in every aspect; in environmental safety, production. That there's always that room for improvement.

And I guess number four--I say it last not because it's the least important but probably because it's most important--is respect people. And that means all people. Every person's job is important, just as important as the top job. The laborer's job is just as important. If that job didn't get done, we wouldn't be as successful as we are. And have that respect for the people.

Swent: You brought a special perspective to that, I'm sure.

Parker: Well, I hope so. But those four things, I think those are my mainstays. And I developed those probably at the early years in McLaughlin, in what I call the formative years. And then when I took over as general manager I had the ability to--Homestake gave me the freedom to do the things I needed to do to make the operation better. And those are still my values.

Swent: Amen. Can't improve on those.

Parker: Yes, you can, because you can always do better. [chuckling]

Swent: Those are marvelous values to hold.

Parker: But you have to put them to work. I mean, you have to mean them. People have to know that you mean them. But more importantly is that you have to have the people on board.

Round-Table Meetings with Employees to Aid Communication

Swent: Translating those into action is your challenge, I guess.

Parker: I talked to all new employees. When they had the orientation, I would bring them over to the conference room and talk to them about those values, very important, and that the GM's [general manager's] door was always open, and I meant it. They could always come and talk to me. And several did. We even set up round-table meetings. Actually, Jack started them early on. I continued them with a little bit of different twist on it, but it was round-table meetings, where every other month I'd have ten employees in the room, hourly employees, and only me. And any topic could be discussed, any question could be asked, and answers would be given. My responsibility was to respond to each and every issue that was brought up. I wrote all of those questions down that the group asked, and responded. There were written answers to all of the questions. The answers and questions were published and handed out to all of the work force.

Swent: That's a major undertaking.

Parker: Well, probably learned that from the Buick smelter. Because we probably didn't communicate enough. Didn't listen enough. And I got better at the round-table in my later years than I did in the beginning because in the beginning I carried most of it, and the later years I listened more. Matter of fact, most of the time, the employees in the room would supply the answers to the questions. So it was really a process that evolved.

[Some narration missed in tape change]

Swent: --comparisons that you might make. Of course, Homestake is non-union, and AMAX had been union. Your budget was about four times what you'd been working with at AMAX.

Parker: That's right.

Swent: At AMAX you had 161 employees versus 350 at Homestake.

Parker: That's right.

Swent: And the size of the operation. This is just very rough arithmetic, but AMAX was doing 150,000 tons per year; Homestake was doing 2 million tons per year. Of course, there was a different process with the mining. The mechanics were somewhat different.

Parker: Homestake really took a chance when they put me in as general manager. I started out as chief plant engineer.

Swent: Yes, I jumped ahead, actually. You were chief plant engineer first.

Maintenance Manager for Both Mine and Mill

Parker: Yes. And after about a year I became maintenance manager. My responsibilities still included the engineering department but added both maintenance departments, the mine and the mill. Then about a year later I became the production manager, which included responsibilities for maintenance and operations at both the mine and the mill. And then after that, general manager. But it was a chance that Homestake took because I had no gold experience prior to coming to the mine, only some lead experience and a bit of asbestos.

Swent: Did that matter?

Parker: I had no general manager experience. And Homestake took a chance with my promotion to general manager. Probably one of the most visible gold mines in the United States, from a technical standpoint, from an environmental standpoint, from a proactive permitting viewpoint, from dealings with local community viewpoint, from successes that we had with the autoclaves. I mean, very visible from everywhere, from all different avenues. And I wasn't a mining engineer. I was the first mechanical engineer Homestake ever promoted to a general manager position.

Swent: In fact, their first former union member, probably.

Parker: Oh, no. Probably a lot of people in their background had some union membership.

Swent: Do you think so?

Parker: Oh, yes. If you worked in an hourly work force most anywhere or helped put yourself through college, you probably had a bit of union experience in your background.

Swent: Maybe not as much as you did, though.

Parker: Well, I'll relate a little story. When they told me I was going to be general manager, Al Winters was VP of operations at that time. Jack Thompson had just been promoted--no, he hadn't been

promoted, but they knew he was going to be promoted to president of Homestake International. So Al called me on the telephone, and I had been production manager for just a few months, and I had met Al once or twice.

Swent: Thompson was the manager?

Parker: He was still general manager at that time. So Homestake was having a board meeting in San Francisco, and Al called me on the telephone and told me he wanted to see me. I said, "Okay."

He said, "I need you here in three hours."

I said, "Well, I suppose I need a suit."

And he said, "Well, yes, you do."

I said, "Well, that's going to be pushing it." I had to ask him for directions.

Swent: To come here to the office.

Parker: I had never been to the corporate office. And Al knew he was taking a chance.

Swent: Had he been out there very much?

Parker: I think I had only spent time with Al a couple of times.

Swent: I wondered how familiar he was with your operation out there and the work you had done. Had he been out there very much?

Parker: Probably not too much. Hearsay. But he was a remarkable person to work with. Taught me quite a bit. Very perceptive, very good. His questions were always good, always welcome. He pushed me harder than I could have pushed myself. So he made me better, and that's a mark of a good supervisor in the long run--they can make you better than you are. And Al certainly did that.

Swent: Let's see. Maybe we should backtrack just a little bit. The challenges as chief plant engineer. You mentioned the autoclave and the startup, but--

Parker: So those were the challenges, just to get the plant up to operating or nameplate capacity. The 3000 tons per day, that was our push, and to get the autoclaves up over 80 percent. And we achieved that after about a year. And I say "we," and I mean it seriously. And that's back to the Pat Purtells and John Turneys

and the Ivan Marklands and the Doug Booths and everybody else who assisted during that time.

Swent: You mentioned you had only had lead and asbestos experience. But how does it matter? What's the difference between lead and gold? Of course, this process was new to everybody.

Parker: To have the top job at an operations most people would require you to have experience in that industry.

Swent: Well, the autoclaving.

Parker: Few people had autoclave experience.

Swent: Is crushing of gold different from crushing of lead?

Parker: Crushing and grinding would be similar.

Swent: But there were people who did have the experience.

Parker: It was a new process to me, so not only did I have to learn the people and integrate myself into the engineering department, but learn the processes as well. I had a lot of good help. I mean, from a technical standpoint, John Turney was excellent. He would take the time to explain, and I'll forever be indebted to him to take the time to explain the process and work me through it and bear with all of my questions that I had on the process, itself.

Reorganization Separates Operations from Maintenance

Parker: Now, the issues as maintenance manager were a bit tougher because of the reason the job became open--Mike Attaway left the company. He was mine manager. Joe Young at that time was mill manager. And Jack decided to change the organization and instead of having a mine manager and a mill manager reporting to him, he decided to have an operations manager in charge of operations report to him and a maintenance manager in charge of the maintenance function reporting to him. So the operations person became Joe Young, who was in charge of operations at the mill and the mine. And I became maintenance manager in charge of the mine maintenance and the mill maintenance.

Swent: So how do you divide that?

Parker: The departments were already divided. I mean, at the mine you had your operations group, who was headed up by Steve Drake, and you

had your mine maintenance group that was headed up by Jim Fleming. Both of those people reported to Mike Attaway, so when Mike left, Steve started reporting to Joe Young and Jim Fleming reported to me.

Swent: What comes under maintenance?

Parker: Maintenance at the mine would be primarily maintenance of the mobile equipment, to keep the truck fleet running and the shovel fleet and the loader fleet running, and make sure that your availability was up at--that word again--the availability was good on the equipment so that you could mine what you needed to mine.

At the mill, it's mechanical equipment that you wanted to keep operating in the most efficient way possible. So the split is not unusual.

Swent: Are there areas that fall in between, that fall between the cracks or where there's overlap?

Parker: I think Jack, on hindsight, if he had to do it over again, probably wouldn't have organized it that way because probably [it is best] that you have it set up mine and mill because if the head of your mine department is in charge of both maintenance and operations, you can make sure that the functions are keyed in together. And they're so critically important to each other that the person in charge of the mine ought to have control over both departments. And when you separate it, the person in charge of maintenance, if he doesn't report to the person that's in charge of operations, you could have divergent goals. One may want to keep the equipment running properly; the other may want to get that last ton out before the end of the month.

Swent: Can you give an example?

Parker: I think they can be overcome, the issues that I just talked about, but I think it's easier to overcome the issues if the one person has the operations and maintenance than try to marry the two together like that.

Swent: As maintenance manager --

Parker: There were several issues at the mine: we wanted to improve the mine maintenance programs and improve the quality of the fleet, and we were able to do that over the year I was in charge of the maintenance at the mine. And at the mill, it was the continual improvement on the autoclaves, to keep our availability up, to keep the grinding availability up so that we could keep the autoclaves full of material. And we were able to continually make

improvements there. So we were able to make strides on production and improve production. When we do that, we reduce cost as well. So it was critical that we were successful.

Swent: There was a time, wasn't there, when they found that the ore was stickier than they had expected; surprises here and there.

Parker: That's always the issue between the mine and the mill; if the mill is not making their tons, it's because the ore is sticky or has changed metallurgically. I mean, there's always variability. But I hate to use that as an excuse.

Mine and Mill Relations Become Closer

Swent: But when you have that kind of split, then you're blaming.

Parker: Then you have an issue. And I think what Jack wanted to do was bring the mine and the mill a bit closer together. And he did achieve that, by making that split, by making an operations superintendent over both. He could align the goals of the operations department. The job of the mine was to keep the mill filled and to have a single maintenance person over both groups. The goals of the maintenance departments became the same, so Jack did achieve part of his goal, which was to bring the mine and the mill closer together from a communications standpoint. After Jack's departure we decided to reinstall the previous organization. We had been successful in aligning the goals of the mine with the mill.

Swent: So you were in this job only a short time, actually.

Parker: Yes. Ten or eleven months, I think.

Production Manager; Recombining Maintenance, Operations

Swent: As maintenance manager. And then you moved to production.

Parker: Yes. Joe Young left the company and went to U.S. Gold. Then Jack and I decided to put both the mine and the mill under a single person. About that time was when Jack was getting more involved in corporate duties for Homestake Mining Company. He had special talents that Homestake wanted to utilize, so it was pulling him more and more away from the operations. Jack organized the plant

in this way, which allowed him more freedom to be involved in the corporate duties that were required of him and still leave the plant in pretty good order.

I enjoyed these new responsibilities. Now, that job didn't last very long at all, only about three months.

Swent: That was production manager.

Parker: Yes.

Swent: So you were in charge of operations, essentially.

Parker: Operations and maintenance at the mine and the mill.

Swent: So like an assistant manager, actually.

Parker: About as close as you can get to assistant general manager. You could have called it that.

Swent: What were some of the challenges there?

Parker: Well, the challenges there, I think, were just to again have the responsibility of a great mine like McLaughlin. This was the time I began to formulate my vision for the operation. Now you have, instead of a department that's aligned to the goals of the operations, now you're at a point in your career where you're in charge of a larger group of people, and your vision or your mandate or your obligation is larger. So that's when I started formulating my philosophy, the four cornerstones of the operation.

Swent: The permitting and all that was behind you, wasn't it?

Parker: The permitting and communication with the community and the environmental groups never left McLaughlin because we wouldn't allow it to leave, which I think is one of the impressive things at McLaughlin.

Swent: But you had the permits by then.

Parker: We had the original mine permits. Later, we doubled our production during this period of time when we put the new grinding circuit in, which required new permits.

Swent: When was that?

Parker: It would have been about '90. We can look at the tons produced and be able to tell.

Swent: You've got '91 there. [looks at notes] "Mill optimization project began during 1991." Is that the--

Parker: Yes, I think that's probably the time. That would have been a year before that. I think it was '89 when we put that in.

Swent: "Parallel oxide ore processing circuit in early 1989."

Parker: So we started the construction in '88, probably the first part of 1989, and that took a whole new set of permits when we did that, because we doubled the through-put. Now, we were able to get those permits through the county in less than a year.

Swent: Versus five years for the earlier ones.

Parker: Which was a remarkable achievement by Ray Krauss, but I think more importantly--and I'll take a little of the credit away from Ray on that--it said it's the way that McLaughlin operated up to that time. We had a track record of doing what we said we will do. And not only doing that, we were and continue to be proactive with the community. Each year we invite the concerned groups out to the mine, the board of supervisors out to the plant site, to show them what we are doing. We bring the regulatory people. We regularly invite them out. Force them to come up, to show them what we're doing. We invite the environmental groups to go through the plant. The Sierra Club would visit once every two years. Phil Hocker and his group came out at least three times during my reign as general manager. Phil Hocker is with the Mineral Policy Center, a fairly radical group which was against mining. Matter of fact, several of Phil's articles stated that the only good mine in his opinion was the McLaughlin Mine. But we were never afraid. We welcomed the input from the outside, and we just took the input from the outside as a way to get better. It's another way to listen, to listen to the concerns, to follow up on the concerns, and be better because of what you heard, instead of being afraid. So McLaughlin taught me that as well, that you can do that without fear. So you certainly can do that.

General Manager: Long-Term Vision for the Organization

Parker: And then into general manager. And that's really where you take over an organization and then you have a vision. And I think you have to have a long-term vision for the operation. It's going to be constantly changing how you'll get it done. But I think the overall vision shouldn't change much; that you ought to have some things that are standards, that is the baseline.

overall vision shouldn't change much; that you ought to have some things that are standards, that is the baseline.

Swent: It must be a little different, though. Something like, well, Buick, for instance, which you knew had decades ahead of you and this, which had ten years.

Parker: That's right. But the things we felt were important and the things that were important--environmental safety and health, production, continual improvement, respect for people--those last forever. However long the operation is there, those are the things that are really, truly important. And the people know that. All of the people know. You really do end with 350 environmental engineers out there.

We have spills at McLaughlin. People aren't afraid to report the spills and quickly do what has to be done. It makes you feel good when that happens.

Swent: It's really important.

Parker: You want to have 350 safety engineers out there. You really want people looking out for people, saying, "Let's not do this job. We don't have the equipment to do it. Let's not do it. It's not worth getting hurt over." And it's really not.

I think it was Jack Haptonstall, a name from the past in Homestake Mining Company, and it's a bit gruesome, but remember what he said is that, "Rocks with blood on them won't go through my mills." Now, it's hard to think about it that way, but if you really think about it, it really becomes important. Now, I've never used this statement because--

Swent: It's a good one.

Parker: --I don't necessarily like the connotation of it.

Swent: It's very vivid.

Parker: But if you always keep that in the back of your mind, that's really what you're guarding against. That's really what you don't want to happen. You really do want people to go home in the same condition that they came to work. Maybe a little better. They can go home with a little better attitude if work is a little bit fun. And work ought to be a little bit fun. But you want people who want to continuously improve and get better, and I think the round-table meeting with the employees allows us to improve. We would just draw people out of a hat, and some people would be on third shift and would actually come in at one o'clock in the

afternoon to come to the meetings, to be a part of them. And [they] would take it serious. They would poll their co-workers on the issues that ought to be brought up.

Swent: So this was not done on work time.

Parker: It was done during work time, and we would draw people's names out of a hat, and sometimes they would be on second or third shift. And they would show up at the meeting.

Swent: That says a lot, doesn't it?

Parker: Well, it says something for the employees that they felt it was important enough to be a part of it.

Swent: I notice you looking at your watch. I'm sure we have to stop now.

Parker: Yes. Why don't we break it off. And probably when we start back up, maybe we [can] just go through the general manager a bit more.

Swent: Yes. I don't want to skim this, or do it superficially.

Parker: Because there's so many important things we need to talk about there: the technical aspect of McLaughlin, the environmental aspect, community relations aspects of McLaughlin--they were all just so critical.

Swent: Well, we've got a really good two-hour session here. This is great.

Parker: Oh, I think so. I have rambled a bit.

Swent: No, not at all.

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Berkeley, California

Western Mining in the Twentieth Century Series
Knoxville/McLaughlin Project

Richard Stoehr

HOMESTAKE ENGINEER AND GEOLOGIST TO SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT AND DIRECTOR

An Interview Conducted by
Eleanor Swent
in 1995

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Richard Stoehr dated January 16, 1995. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

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It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Richard Stoehr, "Homestake Engineer and Geologist to Senior Vice-President and Director," an oral history conducted in 1995 by Eleanor Swent in *The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, Volume VI*, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1999.

Copy no. _____



Richard J. Stoehr, 1995.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Richard Stoehr

Richard Stoehr began working for Homestake Mining Company as an exploration geologist in 1954, and continued to serve the company variously as mine manager and geologist, vice president, director, and senior consultant to the chairman. He accepted the invitation in August 1994 to be interviewed, and after a planning session on 13 January 1995 we met for two taping sessions on 16 January and 3 February in the Homestake offices at 650 California Street in San Francisco.

I have known Dick Stoehr personally since the 1950s when we lived in Grants, New Mexico, during the uranium mining boom. He was on the scene and behind the scenes with Homestake through more than four decades and knows the company as intimately as anyone. He is still active in its affairs, and also serves as director of several other major companies in the mining industry. He was generous in sharing his recollections, taking the time to gather pertinent documents and to interpret them fully. His interview shows how corporate decisions are shaped by the personalities and life experiences of its executives. Had Richard Stoehr been president of Homestake, the McLaughlin Mine would have been developed very differently. Future historians will be grateful for his good-natured frankness.

The tapes of the interview were transcribed in the Regional Oral History Office and the lightly edited transcript was sent to Richard Stoehr for review. He reviewed it thoroughly and returned it in September 1995 with a few changes for clarification. The manuscript was corrected and indexed at our office. The tapes are deposited in The Bancroft Library and are available for study.

The Richard Stoehr interview is one of more than forty interviews which were conducted by the Regional Oral History Office from 1993-1998 in order to document the development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Knoxville District of Lake, Napa, and Yolo Counties, California, from 1978-1998, as part of the ongoing oral history series devoted to Western Mining in the Twentieth Century. The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. The office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Eleanor Swent, Project Director, Research Interviewer/Editor
Regional Oral History Office

January 1999
The Bancroft Library
Berkeley, California

Regional Oral History Office
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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Richard J. Stoehr
Date of birth march 5 1927 Birthplace Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Father's full name Harvy H. Stoehr
Occupation Power Plant Operator Birthplace Luana Iowa
Mother's full name Ester Winkler
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BS. degree Mining Engineering

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Areas of expertise management - ~~and~~ corporate development,
and Exploration - Mining Industry

Other interests or activities Sailing

Organizations in which you are active American Institute Mining -
Metallurgical Engineering - See Resume Previously furnished

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD STOEHR

I GROWING UP IN IOWA, 1927-1948

[Interview 1: January 16, 1995] ##¹

Childhood and Schooling

Swent: Let us begin, Dick, by having you tell us where you were born and something of your education, and how you came to go into mining.

Stoehr: I was born in Iowa in 1927.

Swent: Where in Iowa?

Stoehr: Cedar Rapids, Iowa. I had some of my early education in a little town called Monona, Iowa, some high school in Dubuque, Iowa. I went to the military service at seventeen and didn't finish high school.

World War II: Service as a Seaman in the Navy

Swent: You were in what branch of the service?

Stoehr: Navy. I was in the navy. I served in the Southwest Pacific.

Swent: What did you do?

Stoehr: I was a seaman and a coxswain. I got out of the navy in 1945.

Swent: Were you in combat?

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Stoehr: No, I was not. I was late in the war. The war was over while I was in the navy. I served out the term; I was in Guam and at Bikini Atoll when we were rigging up to set off the fourth atomic bomb and one of the first hydrogen bombs. Our ship was down there and we helped secure islanders and readied the cameras for the explosions.

Swent: What was your ship?

Stoehr: It was a CVE. The name of it was Point Cruze. It was a small converted carrier, a converted tanker into a carrier. We would carry planes but we couldn't land planes of any size.

Swent: Did this training serve you later at all?

Stoehr: Not really; I don't believe so. I like the sea. I got out of the service. They gave me a high school degree in my absence. I entered college at Drake University in Des Moines in kind of a liberal arts category. I spent one year there. I moved to Ames, Iowa, now called Iowa State University, then called Iowa State College. I obtained a degree in mining engineering with a minor in geology.

Iowa State College: Mining Engineering and Geology Studies

Swent: How did you happen to choose that?

Stoehr: When I got out of the service I talked to the Veterans Administration. They were giving aptitude tests. I took an aptitude test at Drake University which was put on by the Veterans Administration. The interviewer said, "Gee, you should be a mining engineer or a metallurgist."

I had no idea what mining engineers or metallurgists did. He said, "You could be a metallurgical engineer, but those guys work in lots of gases and stuff. It is more healthy to be a mining engineer." So I decided to become a mining engineer.

Swent: You hadn't thought of it until then at all?

Stoehr: No, but I was interested in engineering.

Swent: What kind of test was it?

Stoehr: It was a pretty good test. He told me a lot about myself when I finished the test. I don't know what the name of the test was.

- Swent: Was it just a written, multiple choice kind of a thing?
- Stoehr: Yes, I think there were quite a few things to it. It took several days to take it. I think it was pretty good--I have never been sorry.
- Swent: No, it must have been very good.
- Stoehr: I asked him where the closest school was that taught mining engineering. He said Arizona and Colorado School of Mines. I didn't want to go out there. He said that Iowa State had a mining engineering department. It was a land grant school and apparently their charter was that they had mining engineering--or gave mining engineering degrees. They do not any more. I transferred there.
- Swent: You were on the G.I. Bill, I suppose.¹
- Stoehr: Yes, the G.I. Bill. And I went straight through except for one summer. In other words, I took summer courses and I graduated in about three and a half years, I think. I also took some tests to pass some courses. Of course I had no money.

Field Trips to Mines in Minnesota, Michigan, Missouri, South Dakota

- Swent: Had you ever seen a mine?
- Stoehr: Yes. At Iowa State they had a very good professor. He took all of the mining engineering students, about once a quarter, to mines.
- Swent: What was his name?
- Stoehr: Doctor Charles Frush. He thought that was one thing that was needed, to actually get underground and see mines and see open pit mines. One of the best things in the whole course was once a quarter we would get several cars and we would go to Minnesota, or Michigan, or Missouri, or South Dakota and visit mines. We would drive most of the time to get there. We would even go underground in a mine on graveyard shift if it fit. He expected us to make reports of each property visited. You had to sort of ride in the car and write reports. It was a fairly grueling experience, but

¹ The G.I. Bill [Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944] funded studies for veterans of World War II.

we learned a lot. We got in to see all of the top management people at these mines. They treated us supremely well, and sometimes even fed us, which was great, because we were all on our own. I think the transportation was arranged by the school.

Swent: What were some of the mines that you remember visiting?

Stoehr: We visited Hibbing, of course, and the underground iron mines in Michigan, and the underground copper mines in the Northern Peninsula of Michigan. We visited the St. Joe mines in Missouri, the Eagle-Picher mines in Illinois, and the Homestake mine, and we visited a company called the Bald Mountain Mining Company in the Black Hills.

We happened to go to the Bald Mountain in my senior year, and I was looking for a job. It was in the fall and I was going to graduate in December. My professor suggested that I might write them before we got there and see if they might have something. He had visited this mine and he said it was a very good mine to learn in, so I wrote them a letter in the fall before we went on our trip. They said that they were in need of a graduate mining engineer and would like to interview me. When we visited that mine they did interview me and I didn't get to see some of the mine that the other guys did, but I did see some of it. A month later they hired me.

They sent me a letter and said I was hired. So I had a job. And I needed a job because that summer I had gotten married. I married Margaret Webb from Iowa. She had a job.

Marriage to Margaret Webb

Swent: Was she a student at Ames, too?

Stoehr: No, she was working. She had gone to school at Drake. I met her at Drake and then she had gone to Oklahoma to school. When we got married she got a job in Iowa state. We had a little apartment. When we graduated we loaded everything into our '39 Chevy.

A Practical Education Summer Job at the Lark Mine, Utah

Swent: Let me ask just another question. You had no summer jobs or no jobs before then?

Stoehr: Oh, yes. One summer I worked while I was going to college; I worked in a mine in Utah called the Lark Mine. It was a lead-zinc mine near the Bingham Canyon open pit. It was an underground mine. I worked as a miner and I drove a raise down there. I learned quite a bit about practical underground mining.

Swent: How much were you paid?

Stoehr: Oh, gosh, I don't know, Eleanor. I know at Bald Mountain when I went to work there the labor, at that time, was paid a dollar an hour. I think at Lark I did fairly well. I thought it was a lot of pay at the time because we had contract work. That summer I made so much money that I bought a car while I was in Utah. Then I sold it before I left, and when I got home I bought another car.

Swent: You did pretty well then.

Stoehr: I can't recall. It might have been a couple hundred dollars a month.

Swent: How did you travel from Iowa to Utah?

Stoehr: I don't recall.

Swent: I doubt that you flew.

Stoehr: No, I didn't fly. I think I hitchhiked out. To go back--while I was going to high school, I hitchhiked from Iowa to California and took a job at Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank one summer. I was sixteen. I worked at the aircraft factory where they were making P-38 airplanes.

Swent: Could they hire you at sixteen or did you lie about your age?

Stoehr: They hired me at sixteen. Then I hitchhiked home to Iowa. In those days the war was on and people picked up hitchhikers. That was quite an experience. I think when I went out to Lark, I hitchhiked out. When I went back I went back on the train.

Swent: What sort of housing did they have?

Stoehr: They had kind of interesting housing. They had quite a few single guys working at that mine. It was hard to get people to work in the mines.

Swent: This would have been 1948, perhaps '47?

Stoehr: 1948 probably. They were having a hard time getting labor and they housed us in sort of a military-like tent. There was only

about four guys in a tent. It had a wood floor and sides, and just sort of a tent top. Then we ate in the regular mess hall of the dormitory at the mine. They fed us very, very well.

Swent: They provided the food or was it a part of your wages?

Stoehr: I think we had to pay for it, but it wasn't very much. No one complained about that because the food was good. We didn't have to join the union because we were there, really, too short a period. There were other students there at the time. That was a good experience.

Swent: I think the Lark Mine is where the EIMCO mucker was developed, wasn't it?

Stoehr: I can't recall. Could have been.

Swent: That was before your time there. What kind of equipment were you using?

Stoehr: I was on the--I think it was the 2,900-foot level. There were only two shifts working down there. There were only two small crews and my crew was two people. On the other shift, I think, there were two people. We had the whole level, which was a very short level because it was just being developed. We had one heading, and a drift, and one raise going up. We had our own motor and we had our own mucking machine; we had our own slusher for the raise; we did our own timbering; so we had a little bit of everything.

Swent: Good training?

Stoehr: Yes, it was great. I learned a lot from my helper, who was an old-time mining guy who didn't want to be a miner; he just wanted to be a helper.

Swent: But he was your boss?

Stoehr: No, I was supposed to be his boss, but I learned a lot from him.

Swent: He knew more than you in some ways, I am sure. What sort of drills did you have?

Stoehr: We had leyners, post-and-arm leyners. Heavy suckers. And he was a big guy, so I appreciated that. We had EIMCO muckers, and we had a Mancha trammer. I don't know what the make of the slusher was.

Swent: But it was still hard work?

Stoehr: Oh, yes. It was hard work, yes.

Swent: But it wasn't agonizing?

Stoehr: Not agonizing. I was interested in it and it seemed very interesting.

"A Little Dicey" on Safety Matters

Swent: What sort of safety gear did you have?

Stoehr: In those days you didn't really have a lot. You had hard hats and electric lamps. You didn't have these canisters they wear today. It was a little dicey when you look back on safety. We were driving this raise up through--about a 35-degree raise. The ground wasn't all that good and nobody suggested we put timber in right up to the face or anything. It was kind of sluffy at times. The shift boss didn't come around very often. You just reported to him when you went down and you reported to him when you came back.

We will get deeply involved in the Lark Mine if we aren't careful.

Swent: This is important background. Were you given any safety training at all?

Stoehr: I don't believe so. There was a safety engineer that came by once in a while to give you a few tips.

Swent: You were working a forty-hour week?

Stoehr: I tried to work more than that--as much overtime as a I could get.

Swent: Six days a week?

Stoehr: Yes, I was interested in making money.

Swent: Maybe seven days?

Stoehr: No, I don't think I ever worked seven. I think six, though, quite often--maybe most of the time.

Swent: How did you leave your instructions for the other shift?

Stoehr: You would leave them with the shift boss. You would just come up and tell him what you did. If he had any questions he would ask you. He supposedly wrote something for the next shift.

Swent: I see. But you didn't write anything?

Stoehr: No, no.

Swent: So you learned a lot.

Stoehr: Yes, I learned a lot. I learned to like mining.

Swent: You liked it?

Stoehr: Yes, it was great. Kind of a thrill, you know.

Swent: Developed some muscles you didn't know you had?

Stoehr: Yes.

II WORKING AT BALD MOUNTAIN MINE IN THE BLACK HILLS, 1950-1954

Housing in Lead, South Dakota, and Benefits

Swent: All right, so then you went back and graduated.

Stoehr: Graduated and got this job at Bald Mountain and went out on January 1, 1950. I got out to South Dakota right after Christmas and found an apartment in Lead. That was a very expensive place.

Swent: It was?

Stoehr: Yes. Seventy-five dollars a month furnished, which was well beyond what I should be paying. My salary was, I think, two hundred and forty dollars a month as a starting engineer. Seventy-five seemed to me to be terribly high, but we did it.

Swent: What sort of benefits did you have?

Stoehr: Medical. They had a Dr. Smiley that they paid so much a man. He took care of everybody.

Swent: He was in Deadwood. Did he go up to the mine?

Stoehr: No, no. I think maybe once we had an accident and he came up.

Swent: Was your wife covered as well?

Stoehr: Yes, families were covered, but I don't think the hospital was covered. No, I don't think the hospital was covered; just the doctor.

Swent: Bald Mountain was a few miles--at least six or seven miles from Deadwood?

Stoehr: We went to the Deadwood hospital. That was where my son was born. It was about seven miles to Lead and another three or four miles to Deadwood.

Swent: Ten miles or more to the hospital.

Stoehr: Yes.

Swent: You lived in Lead and drove up to the mines everyday?

Stoehr: I lived in Lead for a while and Bald Mountain Mining Company sent a bus to Lead and Deadwood. I rode the bus up. In those days there were about 150 people working at Bald Mountain. They didn't have dry facilities, so everybody went up and back in their diggers--clothes that they worked in. It was a smelly old bus. It wasn't very comfortable, but I didn't mind it. I had to walk down the hill and catch it at the hotel there in Lead.

Mining Engineer for Three Mines

Swent: This was a gold mine and it was non-union, right?

Stoehr: It was a gold mine. It had operated in the 1800s. It operated fairly steadily except during World War II. It was closed down by the presidential order that closed all gold mines during World War II.

Swent: L-208.

Stoehr: L-208. The geology was very different from Lead, which was seven miles away. It was a sedimentary-hosted gold deposit, which is now all the great thing out in Nevada. Very fine gold; you couldn't see the gold. It was a cyanide extraction; it was a fine grind. The gold heads there were about .15 ounces per ton. At the same time the heads at Lead were about .3, about twice as much. It was a 300-ton-a-day plant with about three different underground mines feeding it. They were not deep; they were near surface; they operated on slope-and-cable transportation.

Swent: What was your job?

Stoehr: I was the only mining engineer. I did the surveying and anything a mining engineer is supposed to do. I worked on that job for, I guess, a little over a year. And the general manager retired, a man by the name of Norman Goodrich. A fellow by the name of Don Moulds was made general manager. He had been mine superintendent.

When he moved up, I moved up, so I became mine superintendent of these three mines. In addition, I did quite a bit of the engineering work because we didn't have an engineer.

The Korean war was on. They started talking about rationing again. There was inflation; costs were going up. We hired a guy who had gotten out of the Rapid City School [of Mines] who was a geologist, but had enough engineering that he could help. His name is Paul Miller. I think he is still there on the property. He did some of the engineering after a while.

Then, Mr. Moulds, who had served in World War II back in Washington in the Strategic Metals Branch or something, went back to Washington, so I moved up to the general manager's job. I was at the ripe age of, I guess, twenty-six or twenty-seven; I was general manager of the property.

Reducing Costs as General Manager

Swent: That is pretty impressive.

Stoehr: I stayed there and did what I could to try to reduce costs. We eventually were doing the same tonnage, producing the same amount of gold with 100 people instead of 150, when I arrived there. It was very difficult because we were not paying competitive wages with Lead.

Swent: Lead is where the Homestake Mine is.

Stoehr: Yes, about seven miles away. We had a little difficulty getting really experienced people.

Swent: You paid less than Homestake?

Stoehr: Yes, by quite a bit at times. But we had installed an incentive plan so there was a possibility of getting more than Homestake paid. That is what I think kept it going. Anyhow, the next thing was the uranium business came along. It sounded exciting to me. I was very keen on it.

Becoming Keen on Uranium

Swent: We are now up to 1953?

Stoehr: Well, I will say '53. I tried to get the Bald Mountain backers interested in uranium. The gold mine wasn't producing much profit for them, there was a little cash flow, but they weren't inclined. The owners were from Iowa and they were in the business of making shelves for refrigerators. They were not too interested in expanding in the mining business. I tried to get some uranium claims for them and see if I could get somebody else to spend some money on these claims.

Swent: Claims there in the Black Hills?

Stoehr: Yes, in the Black Hills for uranium. I monitored what Homestake was doing at the time and I became quite well acquainted with Don Delicate, who was an engineer for Homestake and was working on their uranium prospects in the Black Hills. I spent some time looking at those occurrences in the Black Hills. Then Mr. Delicate was transferred to Utah for Homestake, where Homestake had acquired some uranium properties. After Mr. Delicate was there about three months he came home to Lead, South Dakota, and propositioned me about working in Utah for Homestake, sort of as a mining engineer again.

I had the problem of moving from a manager's house at Bald Mountain where I was general manager, with full responsibility, to going with Homestake Mining Company as an engineer in Utah and to live in a trailer, which I did.

III ENGINEER AND GEOLOGIST FOR HOMESTAKE MINING COMPANY, 1954-1961

La Sal Mining & Development Company, Utah

Swent: Was this at Moab?

Stoehr: Yes. So we moved from this nice, fancy house to a trailer at La Sal camp in Utah and commenced to develop several mines and explore another mine there.

Swent: This was in--

Stoehr: In '54. The Homestake La Sal Mine was just completing the shaft sinking.

Swent: What stage were things in then? Was it still the boom?

Stoehr: Oh yes, very much so.

Swent: Exciting?

Stoehr: Very exciting in Moab. There was a lot of activity. Charlie Steen had found this uranium deposit which he called the Mi Vida which was quite an important discovery at the time. Homestake had acquired three reasonably good, well-located sets of claims, or partial interest in them: one called La Sal, one called Little Beaver, and one called North Alice. We drove a tunnel--it was about 3,000 feet long--into the Little Beaver property to develop it. We sunk a shaft at La Sal to develop it. We drove a long decline into the North Alice for development. I took charge of the exploration on the North Alice ground and the Little Beaver and helped Delicate on the La Sal.

I did some other exploration for Homestake in the area. It was a dynamic time in Moab with a lot of things that weren't

settled. There were claim disputes and lots of discussion about how things should be done, and so forth.

Swent: You must have some exciting stories to tell. Tell some of them.

Stoehr: Lots of exciting stories, but I was kind of anxious to leave. I wanted to really do more exploration. I found that's what was really exciting, in acquiring things and so forth. Dr. Henshaw, Paul Henshaw, was the--I think he was a vice president at that time. Anyhow, he was in charge of Homestake's exploration activities. Don Delicate reported to him, and I sort of reported to him on some matters, mostly the exploration matters. I convinced him I ought to get into exploration and that he ought to broaden Homestake's exploration interests more. All that we were doing was right in the Moab area.

Swent: Everybody in the world was there hunting at that time it seems, weren't they?

Stoehr: There were quite a few companies there, but Homestake did very well. Paul Henshaw got us these properties early on. We did quite well. Although we never got in the milling business there, we had lots of profits from these three properties.

Exploration Geologist, Based in Reno

Stoehr: I was only there a little over a year. Then I moved to Reno, Nevada, as a result of several prospects that were submitted to Henshaw.

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Stoehr: Our charter was really uranium, but Archie Slaughter, who was kind of a roving geologist for Homestake, had acquired a lease on a property in Nevada called the Pinson property. Henshaw finally agreed that I should go out and develop the Pinson property.

The Pinson Gold Property

Swent: This was not uranium.

Stoehr: This was gold. --And also do some development work or exploration work on a uranium property just north of Reno called the De

Longchamps property. We met Mr. Slaughter in Battle Mountain and Henshaw and myself visited the Pinson property, which unfortunately turned out to be also under lease to the Getchell Mine.

Swent: You might say how you found that out. It is kind of a good story.

Stoehr: We went out with the guy that promoted it to Archie Slaughter, a butcher in Battle Mountain. His name was Estes. He took us out to the property and it was obvious that quite a little bit of mining had been done on the property; it looked to me like 10,000 tons or something like that; just a guess. I asked the butcher where the ore went and he said it had been shipped up to the Getchell Mine. The Getchell Mine was operating; it was just up the road ten miles or so. I suggested we go up and ask them what the metallurgy was like, because it looked to me like there could be metallurgical problems.

Swent: The Getchell is famous for its problems.

Stoehr: Yes. They had a roaster and they had a lot of arsenic in their ore. We went up and a fellow by the name of Royce Hardy was running the Getchell at the time. We asked him if he could give us any information on the metallurgical characteristics of the Pinson one, since we had just leased the property. He got a strange look on his face and said, "That is strange; we have had it under lease for the last ten or fifteen years ourselves, and we haven't given it up."

As we learned later at the courthouse, the Pinsons had simply given us a lease on top of the lease they had already given to Getchell, just to try to get Getchell stirred up, I guess. So we didn't get the Pinson property.

Swent: Had you paid something on it?

Stoehr: I don't think very much, if anything. I think there were some payments due, which we didn't pay.

Swent: What happens in a case like that? Do you get the money back that you put into it or do you go to court or what?

Stoehr: You might do either; it depends. You really shouldn't pay any money until you check the title, and the title obviously hadn't been checked at this point. I moved the family out to Reno and got a pickup and went exploring, mostly for uranium. We sunk a shaft on the De Longchamps property.

Swent: That was uranium?

Stoehr: That was uranium. We shipped some small shipments of uranium, but it wasn't a deposit that could make a mine. We did some drilling in Nevada for uranium. Mr. Estes called me one night when I was in Washington looking at uranium.

Swent: Washington state?

Stoehr: Yes, looking at the Dawn Mine and the Daybreak deposit. He called me one night, traced me down, and said that he had some good gold samples from a property north of Carlin and he thought I should look at it. So I did go there.

The Carlin Gold Belt

Swent: Mr. Estes didn't have a lot of credibility with you.

Stoehr: Didn't have a lot of credibility but, I guess, I thought enough credibility to go look at it. It turned out to be what is now known as the Bootstrap property, which is a gold occurrence in the Carlin belt. This was in 1955, well before the Carlin was found or developed or thought of, I guess.

Swent: Was it being mined?

Stoehr: No. There had been some prospecting done by the owners of the property. I made a deal with the owners of the property to lease it and do some work on it. I didn't have much of a budget from Homestake so I made arrangements to do some bulldozing and cut some trenches so I could sample it.

Swent: Was this when you were out there living in a boxcar?

Stoehr: Yes, and I stayed--there was a boxcar out on the property. I don't know who put it there. It was a long way from the railroad, but it made a good camp. I would stay out there and sample, and I staked claims off towards what is now known as the Newmont-American Barrick area of the Carlin trend. I would take samples and send them to Lead, South Dakota, for gold assays. It would take about two weeks for me to get results, but I was encouraged.

Swent: Was this similar to what you had seen at Bald Mountain?

Stoehr: It was a sort of sedimentary, fine gold, microscopic gold. You couldn't tell a lot about it from the trenching. We didn't do any drilling. At one point I went up northwest of the Bootstrap and found some antimony casts in the overburden which looked like the

same antimony casts that were at the Bootstrap. I staked some claims which later turned out to be the Dee Mine. However, the claims were never perfected. But it is interesting to come close to a good discovery like that.

While I was at Reno I spent most of my time on uranium in California, Nevada, Washington, Arizona. There was word out of Ambrosia Lake that there was some exploration and some pretty good uranium being found there.

Ambrosia Lake, New Mexico

Swent: This was in New Mexico?

Stoehr: In New Mexico--Grants, New Mexico. I high-tailed it down there.

Swent: How did you hear things like this?

Stoehr: I guess maybe in the papers or something like that. I can't recall now. I went out into the field and I ran into a fellow that I knew by the name of Breck Parker, who was living in a trailer.

Swent: How did you know Breck?

Stoehr: Henshaw knew him and he brought him to a party we had in Moab one night. He was working for American Metals, I believe, at that time. Anyhow, when I met him in Grants he was living in this trailer and working for American Metals, which was later American Metal Climax, and later AMAX. They had tied up some properties from a fellow by the name of Bokum. They had done drilling and were actually starting to do some water testing. It was pretty clear that the uranium ore in Ambrosia Lake was under the water table. No one knew quite what the results would be of mining in an aquifer of sandstone. American Metal Climax was trying to determine how that would play out and what the costs might be.

Breck Parker showed me some radiometric logs which indicated the amount of uranium in the holes. I had never seen one of these logs. Although we used to drop a Geiger tube down the holes and record readings, I had never seen one of these that actually made a nice chart and I was quite intrigued with it. Breck explained to me how it worked and so forth. I said, "How can you be sure that you are dealing with uranium and not just radioactivity which occurs in some cases?"

Getting Information from Marion Bolton of Kerr-McGee

- Stoehr: He indicated that most of the work they had done was based upon these radiometric readings. He also indicated to me that there was quite a bit of ground that might still be open down there for dealing. I left and went back to Shiprock, where there was a uranium mill operated by Kerr-McGee, and the man who was general manager there was Marion Bolton. Kerr-McGee had some properties in the Ambrosia Lake area and I stopped in to try to see what Marion Bolton thought of his properties down there. He was very enthusiastic about them.
- Swent: It occurs to me--I think this is intriguing, and kind of special, that people would share such information with you.
- Stoehr: I think things were pretty open in those days.
- Swent: Breck, for instance, was he trying to acquire property for American Metals?
- Stoehr: They had properties and I don't think they were really looking for more.
- Swent: They had all they wanted?
- Stoehr: Yes. I think Kerr-McGee was still trying to acquire other properties at that time. There was a lot of conversation in the business. There was a lot of openness.
- Swent: That is kind of amazing, isn't it?
- Stoehr: Especially in the uranium business because so much of it was sort of controlled by the Atomic Energy Commission. They actually had offices around to give out information. They gave out information of what other people were doing, so it wasn't highly secretive like gold is today, for instance.
- Swent: That is quite interesting that you could just drop in on somebody like Marion Bolton and expect to be told.
- Stoehr: Well, I didn't expect to get anything factual, but I said to him, "I am worried that so much of the exploration is based on radiometrics only, and not on real assays, and coring, and chemical analysis."

He said, "Well, we have taken quite a few cores and they are really pretty good." He pulled out of his desk drawer a set of

assays which made my eyes bug out, which were chemical assays. I was convinced right then and there that that was the place to go.

Manager of Exploration Activities; Forming Partnerships for Mining and Milling Uranium

Stoehr: I recommended to Dr. Henshaw that we move the office--which was my wife, two children, and my pickup--down to Albuquerque and try to get some land positions, which we did. Homestake later got a number of property interests in the Ambrosia Lake area. We eventually, I think--I counted them up one time--sunk ten shafts and built two mills--something like that. We built and operated those mines.

Swent: You acquired them from other people?

Stoehr: Yes, various people. We actually, in fact, got the property that Mr. Parker was working on because American Metal Climax didn't think they could mine under the water table. They didn't think it would be economic. They had an option on the property and when we found that out we went to Mr. Bokum and told him if AMAX didn't take up their option, we wanted it. They didn't take up their option and we got it.

Swent: And that is what became Sabre-Piñon.

Stoehr: Yes. Prior to that we made a deal with the Whitney-White-Weld crowd, and had put together a partnership with Rio de Oro, San Jacinto Petroleum, and a fellow by the name of Clyde Osborn, and J.H. Whitney. They contributed properties and we put up the money and managed the operations and built a mill there and later built a mill next door.

Swent: Did you go out and do any claims yourself?

Stoehr: We acquired property for Homestake, yes. We didn't stake any claims; we acquired them from other people.

Swent: You mentioned Henry Birdseye; where did he come in?

Stoehr: When I first went to Albuquerque I ran into Henry Birdseye. He had an office in a building not too far from my home in Albuquerque, so I took an office there. Henry and I got pretty well acquainted and Henry was quite conversant with the uranium business and the people and so forth. By having enough lunches with Henry I learned a lot.

Swent: Was he investing in the uranium business?

Stoehr: Yes, he was investing and he was also a consulting geologist for some companies.

Swent: Did you meet--I guess Rusty [Irving] Rapaport was there.

Stoehr: Rusty, I met in Grants. I was in Albuquerque for--I don't think it was a full year. Then I moved to Grants as we actually decided to go ahead and build and develop these mines and so forth.

Swent: Was this mining at all similar to the later potash venture?

Stoehr: No.

Swent: The water situation was different.

Stoehr: It was quite a bit different. Without getting bogged down in Grants, which is a long, long story and lots of things--litigations, explorations, and so forth; I stayed there from 1956 to 1961. Then I was asked to come to San Francisco.

Swent: You were getting out of geology at that point, were you? What were you doing there in Grants?

Stoehr: I was, first of all, manager of Homestake's exploration activities in Grants, which incorporated all of this acquisition stuff and everything. Mr. [Abbott] Shoemaker took over the general management of all of the uranium, including Moab. At that time Homestake had gotten into some uranium in Wyoming, and he took over the management of the Grants operations. Then Langan Swent¹ was sent down to Grants as manager of the Grants operations, reporting to Mr. Shoemaker. I was sort of all of the time working for Henshaw. I reported the exploration activities to Mr. Henshaw. When Mr. Swent arrived, I was sinking the first shaft down there on Section 32 for the Homestake-New Mexico partners. I carried on that activity. Then as a result of a court case--

Swent: This Rio de Oro, San Jacinto group was called the New Mexico Partners, right?

Stoehr: Yes. So as a result of a court case, after about a year the court decided that the two partnerships should be managed separately.

¹ Langan W. Swent, "Working for Safety and Health in Underground Mines; San Luis and Homestake Mining Companies, 1946-1988," Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 1995.

Swent: This was Homestake-Sabre-Piñon; Homestake-Sapin?

Stoehr: Right, and Homestake-New Mexico Partners. Mr. Osborn, who was general manager, decided he was going to be general manager of the Homestake-New Mexico Partners, and I was going to be assistant general manager, and I was going to be mine superintendent. In addition, I was still able to maintain my position as manager of exploration for Homestake. I had those various titles and I worked with Langan, who was manager of the Sapin partnership, in various categories of activities that we did share. It wasn't really what I wanted. I still wanted to do more, either corporate development or exploration work. I agitated to get out of there.

At that time Homestake's top management was changing and Don McLaughlin, who had been chairman and president, decided to bring in a man from the outside to be the next president of Homestake. His name was John Gustafson. John was brought to San Francisco, and I guess in discussions with Henshaw of what was going on, John said, "Well, let's get some help out here." We only had Henshaw doing the exploration work.

Swent: Gustafson was a geologist himself.

IV WORKING OUT OF THE HEADQUARTERS IN SAN FRANCISCO, 1961-1984

Expanding into Other Minerals

Stoehr: Gustafson was an explorer, a corporate development guy, and an acquisition guy. Henshaw asked me to come out to San Francisco in 1961. I came out here and was given the job of trying to get Homestake into the industrial mineral business, which I knew absolutely nothing about. I worked away at that. About that time we hired Breck Parker to do other exploration work. Breck and I worked together a lot. We did acquire a brick plant--a brick deposit which had a brick plant on it. We were going to put in a plant and make light-weight aggregate, which was done.

Swent: Where was this?

Stoehr: Port Costa, California. Port Costa Clay Products. I would say it was a somewhat unsuccessful venture, but I don't think we lost any money. John Gustafson was very eager to expand the company in any direction except gold. His theory was, if gold prices went up--they were still thirty-five dollars an ounce at that time--that Homestake would have plenty of gold at Lead and a good position. If gold didn't go up we needed to do something because our costs were going up with inflation every year; the gold price was fixed by the government.

We looked at lots of things in the world--lots of things, and all over the world. We looked into mines in Libya, iron ore and copper ore in Mauritania, Africa. We had projects going in Spain, New Guinea, Australia, Canada. There was nothing that was precluded that we wouldn't look at or where we would look at it. It was a very active period.

Swent: Any mineral?

Stoehr: Almost any mineral if it made some sense. I worked on projects in Peru that involved potash and phosphate. Through all that effort,

we acquired several things. One was an interest in an iron mine in Australia.

Swent: Which was that?

Stoehr: Koolinooka, it is called. It is near Geraldton. That project shipped the first iron ore to Japan from Australia. It was unbeneficiated and shipped in raw form. It was a moderately successful project. We also got into the Missouri lead venture with AMAX. We acquired an interest in a potash venture with U.S. Borax.

Swent: That was the one in Saskatchewan?

Stoehr: Yes. At that time I was busily working on uranium. We had lots of reorganization and activities in the uranium business. I was very active in that area.

Swent: Were you still hunting for uranium mines?

Stoehr: Yes, we were hunting for uranium. Recall that uranium was mostly purchased by the American government through, I think, 1966. We had contracts with the government. Everyone was anticipating that the domestic utility industry--nuclear industry--would come along and they would be our customers after that. There was a little hiatus period when the price of uranium was very weak. During that period I organized and set up quite a big exploration program to acquire properties in Wyoming, Texas, Utah, and New Mexico. My theory was that was the time to get a position, when people were not so interested, and we were able to get fairly large positions for Homestake.

We made arrangements--in one case the German government, through a company called Urangesellschaft, sponsored or actually paid for the exploration activities in one area so as to obtain part of the property interests that I had acquired. Then in another two areas, Westinghouse put up the exploration money to obtain a position. We were spending a lot of other people's money looking for uranium. Those ventures were fairly successful.

Swent: Those were the days when there was still no organized opposition to nuclear power.

Stoehr: Not much organized opposition; it was coming.

Swent: We thought it was going to solve a lot of problems. We were all pretty enthusiastic about it.

Stoehr: It basically has solved a lot of problems, but people don't recognize it.

Swent: But it was a lot rosier sounding then.

Stoehr: People were very excited about uranium up until about '66, then there was a hiatus period where a lot of interest was lost, but there were still people that could see the future. That is what we tried to capitalize on and we obtained some interesting positions then.

Chief Executive, Homestake Potash Company

Stoehr: During this period of time I was given a title of chief executive of Homestake Potash Company. We organized the Allan Potash Mines with U.S. Borax, and Swift and Company. We sank two shafts in Saskatchewan and built a huge potash facility which Homestake sold in 1969. Mr. Henshaw turned his attention to the Missouri lead venture. I did not have anything appreciable to do with the Missouri lead venture. We obtained interest in Creede, a silver mine in Creede, Colorado, and put that into production. We just had a lot of things going.

Swent: That was an old mine, though, wasn't it?

Stoehr: It was the Creede area, but this was a new mine on a new structure in Creede, the Bulldog structure. Nobody had mined that before. At just about the same time, 1968, the government decided they didn't want to buy any more gold. All the gold that Homestake produced was sold to the government. In fact, a certain amount of inventory was all we could retain. We couldn't go above a certain amount of inventory; we were required to sell it to the U.S. government at \$35 per ounce. In 1968 they literally let us know overnight that they weren't going to buy our gold any more, so there was a problem of what to do.

Marketing Gold After 1968 ##

Swent: We were just saying that the government had said they would no longer purchase any gold at all.

Stoehr: That is right. They had made an agreement with other foreign countries to basically reduce the role of gold in international finance.

Swent: This was in '68?

Stoehr: Yes. Up until this time the American public was not allowed to own gold. The miners had to sell their gold; they couldn't maintain it in inventory. The government redeemed dollars that were held by foreigners in gold. In the early 1970s the government had some runs on the gold by England especially. They decided they weren't going to redeem any more of the dollars in gold.

Swent: You had no inkling that this was going to happen?

Stoehr: No inkling. We had to rally around. And Mr. Gustafson suggested that we get out and try to sell the gold. He asked me if I would take responsibility for that. I got a fellow that had some marketing experience, a fellow by the name of Russ Wallace. We started out and went to all kinds of buyers of gold: dentist supply people, jewelry people, everything. We tried to establish a market. Russ was really the leader in this. He worked for me but he worked full-time at it. We were able to sell all the gold in not too long. We set up a sales relationship with these customers, and shipping arrangements and all this. It worked out quite well. Later on we were involved in selling the lead and by-products from the lead operation. Russ continued to work for me and we did that. He later became vice president of sales for Homestake.

Marketing Uranium in the 1970s

Swent: Was this your first major experience with marketing?

Stoehr: Oh, no. I had done quite a lot of work on the uranium marketing at about that same time. For the first time in Homestake's history there was a marketing effort; it really started with uranium. We were selling some uranium to the utilities in the mid to late sixties. We decided to do quite a bit more in uranium marketing at one point. We had this arrangement with the Germans in exploration. We had a partnership meeting in Frankfurt, Germany.

After the meetings in Germany, I stopped in France because I had read that the French--General de Gaulle--had acquired a lot of

uranium for what he called the Force de Frappe, which was his atomic bomb group. He acquired more uranium than they needed and I thought perhaps they might want to sell some in the future. This was in 1969. The result of that activity was that Homestake obtained options to buy French uranium, about a million pounds a year, starting in '72, on to '80, each year, for a fixed amount of money, like six dollars a pound. The only requirement that Homestake had was to buy, under these options, a million pounds. That led to a lot of marketing effort; we were selling our uranium, and we were selling French option uranium, and we were borrowing uranium from Westinghouse and selling that. We had lots of activities going on. We, in fact, were even selling enriched uranium and financing the enrichment for utilities and taking notes back. It was a very active and exciting period.

Swent: Was an eight-dollar price about what it was then on the market?

Stoehr: We got it from the French at a fixed price of six dollars a pound which escalated--it was 5¢ a quarter, about 20¢ a year in fixed American dollars. The American dollar strengthened and the deal was very good, and then uranium prices started up. In about 1974 the uranium prices were going up very rapidly. Before we were through we had uranium prices at forty-five dollars a pound. There was a huge amount of profits in this transaction; very, very big.

Swent: That must have made you feel good.

Stoehr: Yes, but it was very trying, though, because there were all kinds of anti-trust activities that were going on, hearings and anti-nuclear activities. It was a very difficult period.

I am way far from the McLaughlin Mine?

Swent: I think all of this bears on it, though. You were developing skills that came into play later. All of this affected the company's corporate attitudes as well.

The Pitch Uranium Mine in Colorado

Swent: We should just mention the Pitch Mine at some point.

Stoehr: As a result of some of the activities with Westinghouse and the exploration activities, we acquired an interest in the Pitch Mine which had been produced to some degree before. We did drilling there and found quite a lot of very good grade uranium ore.

Swent: This was in Colorado also.

Stoehr: In Colorado, fairly high up, near Gunnison, very near the continental divide, very high grade material. We decided that we should build a mill there. It was of a sufficient size to build a mill. I can't remember the dates now, but we started designing a mill and we got into a lot of difficulties in trying to get approvals, both from the anti-nuclear people and the environmental people who were in government. We were really shocked at all that was going to be required of us. Eventually there was no mill ever built there. The ore was mined and shipped to Grants, New Mexico, at a very high cost. The mine was not completely mined either but it was profitable.

Swent: As a result of the operation or the environmental problems?

Stoehr: It was such a high cost to truck the ore all the way to Grants.

Swent: I mean the decision not to build the mill.

Stoehr: I would say probably, basically, it was just so difficult to get the permits and we were making such slow progress. The costs were going up all the time and we decided to mill the ore at Grants, New Mexico. I was not too much involved in that decision. Sometime about 1976 I had decided that the best thing I could do was concentrate my activities on the several uranium litigations which involved Homestake. Mr. Canfield was responsible for the uranium activities at that time.

Swent: You were a director by then.

Stoehr: I was a director in 1971.

Swent: And then you withdrew as director. Would you care to comment on that?

Stoehr: That wasn't at this point. That was about '82. If we are now about '78 or so, maybe it was a year or so before that. I asked to be relieved of my duties with regard to the management of the uranium because of the litigation that we were involved in. I also wanted to get back into corporate development. Mr. Conger took over, I believe, at that time, uranium activities; later Mr. Canfield.

Manager of the Fuels Division

Swent: I think '75 was when you were put in charge of the uranium, wasn't it?

Stoehr: Yes, or '74. I don't know when it was. We made a fuels division; I was put in charge of that. That had coal in it. We were supposed to do some things in coal. I was quite active in all of the uranium activities well before they made it a division. I think it was in '74 when Homestake decided to make a gold division, a fuels divisions, and a metals division.

Corporate Director; Executive Committee

Swent: That reorganization was really put into place in 1975. Then I think you left it in 1976, didn't you?

Stoehr: That's right. I left the uranium division.

Swent: Conger became president in 1977.

Stoehr: Yes. Anyhow, in '76 when I left uranium, he took over the uranium. I stayed on the board. I was on the board and on the executive committee. We had a board committee called the corporate development committee, which met monthly. It was outside board directors and some inside people, and we looked at what we were going to do in the future and all those things that had great interest to me, although I was still much involved in uranium. That is when McLaughlin came along.

V THE MCLAUGHLIN MINE, 1978-1985

Increased Exploration for Gold

Swent: The McLaughlin Mine?

Stoehr: Yes.

Swent: That can be confusing because you have Homestake Company; Homestake Mine; McLaughlin, Donald; and McLaughlin Project. We have to keep these things straight. But before that there was this corporate development decision to concentrate on gold?

Stoehr: Not really. There was more activity.

Swent: Or to concentrate on exploration, maybe.

Stoehr: At about this time there wasn't a lot of interest in uranium's future in Homestake. Starting at about '78 there was a feeling that the environmentalists were going to win the round. I think Chernobyl happened in March of '79--not Chernobyl; Three Mile Island nuclear accident. Anyhow, uranium hit a peak price in October of 1978; that I remember. From there it went down from forty-six dollars a pound to--current prices are about nine.

Swent: The forty-six was then?

Stoehr: Yes, at that peak price. There was a decision that more effort would be made on gold. In 1974 private ownership of gold was re-instituted. I think in 1971 Nixon took us off gold by refusing to redeem foreign-held dollars for gold; in fact, wouldn't redeem any dollars for gold at all. Up until that time they sort of pretended like they would, from 1968 to 1971. Inflation started very rapidly after that decision was made. Gold bounced around; I think it went back to thirty-five dollars in 1972. I don't think that chart goes back that far. [Refers to chart of gold prices.]

You can see that in '68 we quit selling to the government and the price held until '71. We went off the gold completely in '71. Then it went up a little bit and came back down. It never got to be \$100 until '73. That was all encouragement to spend more on gold. Say, in '78 it was on a pretty good uptick. From '76 to '78 it was on a pretty good uptick and more people were enthusiastic about gold. I guess you could say that attention was much more on gold at that time and there was more activity.

Late in the sixties we made an arrangement with Getty Oil Company. They put up quite a lot of exploration money to look for gold in Nevada, which was done by Henry Colen, who was vice president of Homestake's exploration at that time.

Swent: That was after the Carlin?

Stoehr: Yes, after my affair in Carlin area which was in 1955. Then Carlin deposit was found by Newmont, and the Carlin deposit was put into operation.

Swent: That was in the early sixties, wasn't it?

Stoehr: Yes. It was still at thirty-five-dollar gold, so it must have been about mid-sixties. I would guess it is mid-sixties. There was a change in management, I believe, in '75. I don't know when Jim Anderson was brought into Homestake, but Jim Anderson and Harry Conger were brought in at the same time.

Swent: Conger came in 1975, so I guess that must have been the same time.

Stoehr: That was the reorganization--they split up and made divisions. When Conger moved into uranium and later as president, Jim Anderson was made an executive vice president; he was in charge of exploration. There were increasing efforts on gold. One of the things the exploration group was doing was reviewing all of the old documents and files of the exploration that had been done by Homestake. They came across this report on the Cherry Hill property. I think it was in 1926. It could have been later, however, that Homestake, directed from Lead, South Dakota, acquired this property in California.

The Cherry Hill Mine

Swent: They actually acquired it then?

Stoehr: They acquired a lease on it or a property interest. I don't know what it was. I don't know what the situation was at that time. I understood they had acquired an interest in it, or a lease on it, or an option on it. They had sent people out from Lead, South Dakota, and drove an exploration drift into this gold deposit which is a little east and north of Clearlake, California. After finding this old report and learning the results of the samples that were taken during that work the exploration people were very encouraged, especially in view of the increased price of gold.

The exploration people at Homestake went out and found that the property was available. I can't tell you how it was available, but they found it was available and they re-acquired it, or re-leased it, or re-optioned it. I don't think it was stakeable. Then they did some drilling on it. That property never made a mine, but as a result of that work, the exploration fellow by the name of Don Gustafson, who was in charge of the field work at that time, traveled around in the area and looked at similar occurrences.

Swent: Did you ever go up to Cherry Hill?

Stoehr: Yes, later. He was looking for similar occurrences. He went to the Manhattan property, which is now called the McLaughlin Mine. He took some samples there. They turned out to be encouraging for gold content. Then they obtained a lease on that property. So they had the two properties; first drilled on the Cherry Hill property and did more sampling work on the McLaughlin property. At that time some of the directors and some of the staff went up and looked at both of the properties.

Swent: When were you first aware of this?

Stoehr: I was fairly current.

Swent: I would think so.

Stoehr: The board was meeting once a month and there were regular reports made to the directors at each board meeting, of the activities. So I guess I was fairly current on all that.

Swent: They had come to the board with the Cherry Hill?

Stoehr: Yes. They advised the board about properties they acquired and what their thoughts were and so forth. Someone, I don't know who it was, I guess it was probably Henshaw, suggested that we ought to have a good look at these properties because they sounded kind of interesting. They organized a visit and for some reason I couldn't go. I can't tell you exactly who went on the first

round. It was Don McLaughlin, Henshaw, Conger, Anderson, could have been Langan Swent, too. I am not sure who else went. Some others of the board members went. They looked at both properties.

Then, for some reason I was traveling and I came back. Henshaw said, "I want you to look at those properties." Or maybe it was McLaughlin. Jim Salisbury, who was also on the board, who was a geologist and had not been in that first go-around, Jim Salisbury and I went up. That was the first time I looked at it. They, at that time, were drilling on the Cherry Hill. They had a drill and they had some sort of housing around the drill.

I said, "What is that for?"

They said, "This property that adjoins us here is a nudist camp. To get the permits we had to agree to enclose the drill so nobody could see the nudist camp." It wasn't very apparent. I kind of peeked around the boards; you wouldn't have seen anything.

They were getting a lot of water in the drilling at Cherry Hill, hot water. Then we went down to McLaughlin and looked at that outcrop, which was then the Manhattan. There was a mercury operation on the property and it looked like a mess, but the outcrop looked magnificent.

To go back--at Cherry Hill they had opened up the drift or the old tunnel that Homestake had stuck in there in 1926 and were able to get in and check the sampling. It looked very good. In fact, you could actually find free gold in there. That was kind of encouraging. We didn't know a lot about the geology of either place. The idea was we would all vote on which one we thought would make a mine.

Swent: You couldn't see gold at Manhattan?

Stoehr: No, you couldn't see gold, but the assays looked pretty good. There was a huge amount of quartz there. Anyhow, the vote--and I can't tell you what the vote was. I looked in the records. I thought I had a record of it.

A Vote to Decide Between Cherry Hill and Manhattan

Swent: This is the board vote after this field trip?

Stoehr: Yes. It really wasn't a board. It was kind of the technical people here on the board or on the staff. In general, the mining engineers, with the exception of me, voted that the Cherry Hill

would make a mine. Most of the geologists voted on McLaughlin. I was in the geologist camp. Today there is a mine at McLaughlin and there isn't one at Cherry Hill, so I guess we were right, the ones that voted for McLaughlin. Cherry Hill may make a mine some day; I don't know. It was kind of fun because it was an interesting split.

Swent: What is your recollection of the date on the discovery of McLaughlin?

Stoehr: Didn't we check that the other day? You have it here February of 1978. I would say that is probably about right. I think when we got out there--

Swent: This is the official--

Stoehr: Yes. I would guess June was when we went up and did this voting, something like that.

Swent: It wasn't publicly announced for another--a long time.

Stoehr: There was no drilling done at that time, to speak of. There was no known ore body there at the time of voting.

Swent: It takes a long time.

Stoehr: The drilling proceeded and I remember I got involved a little bit when there was a fellow in charge of that exploration project--it was very difficult to get drilling permits and it was time-consuming; I suggested to him that maybe we could take some samples with a jackhammer.

Swent: Was this the fellow that you talked to that was up there?

Stoehr: Yes. He was in Oroville. We had an office in Oroville and I stopped one night coming home from some project. I remember it was at night and he took me down to the office and we had a good talk of what the latest sampling was. He was telling me how he was delayed getting a permit to drill. I said, "Could you take a jackhammer out there and do some sampling?"

He didn't think that he would be prevented from doing that. I said, "Why don't you get a wagon drill? It is just like a jackhammer." So he did. He drilled a bunch of holes, forty or fifty holes. It really looked quite exciting.

Swent: And you didn't have to have a permit for that?

Stoehr: Apparently never had a permit for that, and he didn't think you needed one. A wagon drill is just like a jackhammer. You don't use water with it, or stuff like that; it's pretty benign. Anyhow, that pretty well said to me that there was probably a mine there.

Swent: This was at the Manhattan?

Stoehr: Yes. Later they got the permits and they did the regular type of drilling and coring work and so forth and determined that there was quite a quantity of gold there.

Swent: You had mentioned, and I didn't have it here, that at one point you and Don Delicate went up.

Stoehr: That was later.

Swent: That was later. When they were doing some underground work?

Stoehr: That was later, quite a bit later.

Swent: This should be a good place to stop.

[Interview 2: February 3, 1995] ##

Swent: When we stopped the other day we had gotten up to 1980, but I have a few questions--a few odds and ends that I thought you might want to comment on.

Concern for Health in the Early Uranium Mines

Swent: Going back to Moab for a minute, I was wondering--you were working at the North Alice, the Little Beaver, and La Sal--was there any concern about radiation safety at that point? We know so much more now, but if we try to get back into the scene then, what was the level of awareness?

Stoehr: Number one, during that period they were shooting big bombs off in the atmosphere down near Las Vegas--the test grounds. The radiation would drift up and we could actually measure it on the instruments we were using to control the mining.

Swent: This is just atmospheric radiation?

Stoehr: Atmospheric radiation, and it would last for a while. In the field behind a big rock or behind a log or something, you could take and measure quite high readings.

Swent: What were you measuring with?

Stoehr: With a scintillator, which is a large crystal that measures the gamma radiation. We use the same instrument to prospect, so we could measure this radiation from the bombs. The second thing was underground we were developing these mines, and especially La Sal was a very high grade mine. As we got first off the shaft and into the ore it had very high radon. We knew something about radon, but not very much. The Utah authorities started measuring radon about that time in the mines. They measured the radon in La Sal and reported it was very high. We were in the process of putting in ventilation. At that time we didn't have our own instruments to measure radon, but we subsequently got them and started--

Swent: They aren't measured with the scintillators?

Stoehr: No, they were measuring alpha radiation. You take a filter paper and pump air through it and then measure the radiation on the filter paper in a special alpha counter on the surface. Take the time, you would pump the air through, take it to the surface, put it in and measure the radiation that is on the filter. Then wait so many minutes, I believe, maybe like a half hour. Then measure it again. What you record then is decay, decay of the radiation in that period of time. That gives you a measure of the radon daughters formed as the radon decays.

People were not too excited about all this, but it was fairly clear that measures should be taken to try to keep the radon concentrations down. We used underground a gamma radiation machine called a babble counter. The reason it was called a babble counter was because it made a lot of noise when you got near radiation. We used to come out from working underground, and blow on the babble counter and knock it off all scales. We had so much radiation just in the lungs. This was kind of scary.

Swent: You were aware that this was--

Stoehr: Yes, I actually showed several people--I think I showed the Utah people when they came down--the Utah health physicists. And Langan Swent would have been able to tell you names. The Utah health people actually were leaders in the field of arriving at radiation standards for use underground and so forth, and radon standards. Progress was made during the mining of the uranium in

all the states to lower radon content, almost constantly throughout the period of time that uranium was mined.

Swent: You said Utah authorities; these are public health service--

Stoehr: Yes, I think so.

Swent: Not especially miners.

Stoehr: There was a gentleman--I am pretty sure he was with the Utah Health Department. Later, I think he became prominent with the federal government but I can't do the history of--

Swent: Were you taking any special precautions underground?

Stoehr: Just ventilation.

Swent: You weren't wearing respirators?

Stoehr: No.

Swent: Was there any thought of the connection with smoking being a danger?

Stoehr: Not at that time, no.

Swent: You weren't aware of these things at all.

Stoehr: There was more concern about diesel equipment being used underground because that hadn't been done in a lot of places and was being done in uranium mines.

Swent: If you can remember--it is hard looking back--what were perceived as the dangers of the radon?

Stoehr: I guess people were concerned about radiation in general, not knowing much about it.

Swent: Was there any specific ailment?

Stoehr: I think fairly early on we were told that there had been high incidence of cancer in the Czechoslovakian miners, which was sort of a first alert. I was always a little bit concerned about radiation in general, whether it was alpha, or radon, or gamma. We were getting quite a bit of gamma.

There was an experiment going on in my school at Iowa State University in Ames. When I went to school there I knew they were doing this experiment. It was, I think, somewhat confidential or

secret. They were exposing generations of rats or mice in cages to radiation source. Some of the cages were closer and some of them further away from the radiation source. Then they would breed and have another generation to see if there was a generic problem with radiation in general.

I remember when I was at La Sal I wrote to this professor that was doing this work and told him I was working in uranium mines and I had an interest in the results of his study and would be pleased if he was able to give me something. I never heard from him. I don't know whatever happened to that experiment, but it was probably interesting.

Swent: If you can recall, was there any concern in the general community around the mine?

Stoehr: I don't think so. There were a lot of outcrops of uranium and people lived around them. In Idaho, tourists flocked to caves that had a high radiation--radon count--for the cure benefits they thought they would receive from the radiation. Maybe they did receive it.

Swent: Spas.

Stoehr: Yes.

Swent: Jumping up a little bit to another--you talked about the claims you staked at the Dee. You said they were never perfected. I was wondering if you could suggest what happened.

Stoehr: I put out the claim locations and never went back there. I was working on other things. In fact, shortly after that I went to New Mexico on uranium and I never went back there, so there was never any stakes actually put out. Location notices were put out, but not any stakes, and they were never filed with the county. [It was] just abandoned, just a prospect. It was mentioned to various exploration people from time to time. They were later staked in 1982 by--I can't remember who it is. John Livermore¹ dealt with that person.

Swent: No one at Homestake pursued it?

Stoehr: No.

Swent: We are jumping back now, again to the very beginning days of the California exploration, you said that you stopped in an office in Oroville and you don't recall the name of the man who was working there. You indicated that his reports were not--I have forgotten how you phrased it--they had vanished.

¹John Livermore, interview in process 1999, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Stoehr: No. We discussed what was going on in Oroville that night. We discussed the idea--he was having trouble getting drilling permits, or it was taking a long time to get drilling permits. We discussed how you might drill with jackhammers or something where you wouldn't need a permit. He did go ahead and arrange for airtrack drilling. I think they drilled forty or fifty holes, airtrack; which was never discussed in the board at Homestake, let's put it that way. I just gave you some files which indicate that there are some files that exist of that drilling.

Swent: Yes, you very helpfully got a list of all the exploration files from the office in Reno.

Stoehr: Of the McLaughlin.

Swent: Yes. There were lots of reports which will be helpful to somebody if they ever need them. But this particular early analysis was--

Stoehr: The early analysis indicated quite definitely that it was something of substantial interest there.

Swent: I was wondering, why Oroville? That is another county. That is Butte County, isn't it?

Stoehr: I think it is just a place they established. I believe it was Oroville.

Swent: That would be a different county.

Stoehr: Yes. Well, they were covering a large area of exploration. They were covering Northern California and that was just, I think, a convenient place. I sometimes get mixed up. It could be some other place, but I think it was Oroville. It wasn't Woodland.

Swent: Later they had an office in Woodland.

Stoehr: It could have been Colusa. I can't even find Oroville on my map.

Swent: It is out there somewhere.

Stoehr: I imagine it was Colusa, probably Colusa. Colusa, question mark.

Environmentalism in Colorado

Swent: Just give us a little bit of background. You had been well aware of what was going on in Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, of course. I

was wondering if there was much awareness of what AMAX was doing with its environmental problems up there. As I understand it, they were quite early in the kind of thing that Homestake did at McLaughlin, in getting the permits, enlisting community help.

Stoehr: AMAX had developed the Henderson mine in Colorado.

Swent: That was several years before.

Stoehr: Yes, it was a fairly new mine. They set up an environmental department. They had lots of environmental questions raised by the old Climax mine. They had tailings down a valley there that was above the various towns, Frisco, Colorado. I think they wanted to make sure they did Henderson right because there was a lot of pressure on them, on the Climax property which was operating. Then they tried to develop a mine at Crested Butte, north of Gunnison. They ran into the ski bums up there and got thoroughly taken over the coals just thinking that any mining company would come in and upset a ski area. They were very sensitive to the whole environmental movement early on.

Swent: Did this compare to what Homestake was going through?

Stoehr: I don't think Homestake necessarily focused on AMAX. We just know them in the industry. They have a fairly capable group. They were also involved in coal developments up in Gillette, Wyoming. They had done quite a lot of environmental work up there. They sort of took a lead position, rather than a reactive position. I guess that rubbed off a bit on Homestake; I am not sure. I don't recall any overt discussion of it.

Swent: It seems there was so much concern about the fact that it would be so difficult to put a mine in California, and I am thinking that actually there would be difficulties in other states as well. Did Colorado and California have similar problems?

Stoehr: I can't remember exact dates. Colorado had a fellow by the name of Lamm who was Governor. He was very much of an environmental guy. He and Hart kind of ganged up and the people in the western part of Colorado didn't like what was going on. There was a lot of controversy. There were some very rabid environmentalists in the Colorado regulatory groups. It was difficult to reasonably talk to anyone in that group at one time.

Swent: You had run into this at Pitch.

Stoehr: This fellow by the name of Metzenbaum--I guess he retired from the Senate, retired from Congress last year--his son was involved in the Colorado movement. There was an incident where my son was

working for Climax. If the AMAX mine went ahead in Crested Butte, he was interested in trying to move to that new development, so one day he and my wife--he had a couple of days off--went down and talked to some real estate people. The real estate person was showing him real estate in Crested Butte. As they were driving around he asked my son what he did and my son told him he worked for AMAX. He stopped the car and ordered him out of his car.

Swent: The realtor?

Stoehr: The realtor in Crested Butte. That was how bad things were. That mine has never gone ahead, and I don't know if it ever will. That was a little environmental incident in Colorado.

Swent: So California wasn't the only state--

Stoehr: California wasn't as difficult, I don't believe. But McLaughlin happened to be located where three counties were involved. In California the rules were that the county had jurisdiction. It was difficult to get all three counties tooled up.

Swent: Was this not true in Colorado?

Stoehr: The counties, I don't think, played a very big role in Colorado at all. It is more state control.

Developing the Theoretical Geologic Model

Swent: Are we ready to move on? You had just mentioned that there was this vote, and I think you also had told me off the tape that at that time each division manager was making monthly reports to the directors which were attached to the agenda. These don't seem to have survived.

Stoehr: I haven't been able to find those. That would have given us a nice, clear idea of what was going on at a certain time.

Swent: One of the questions that you had raised was whether the geologic, theoretical model was developed after or before Cherry Hill.

Stoehr: As I told you, the work that was done in 1926 under management from Lead, South Dakota, a drift was driven and channel samples were taken. That report was in the file, and it was discovered in the file. It is interesting to note that in the material I just gave you there is another report. You may just want to show that

to me for a minute. I just saw here--I thought I saw a report here on a 1960 report. I guess that is the professional report.

Swent: By professional you mean from the USGS?

Stoehr: USGS, yes. I thought it was Homestake's report. I am sorry. Homestake had done this work and someone went--one of the exploration people were assigned to look through the files in Lead, South Dakota, about the exploration that the company had done in the past. They came across this report and showed that there were some interesting gold values there. The exploration people went out and found that the property was available.

Swent: I was thinking there was something so--as I understand it; I am not a technical person--unique about this combination of the hot springs, and the mercury, and the gold.

Stoehr: That's right. I think that was realized after they really got into it. What they did after they got into and looked at what was going on at Wilbur Hot Springs, which is Cherry Hill--same place--they then locally did reconnaissance on all of the similar mineralized occurrences which were somewhat mercury, hot spring-type in that area. As they got more acquainted with this and saw McLaughlin developing, they decided to actually adopt a hot springs model. Then they went out and looked at all of the similar hot spring occurrences in the United States. They actually acquired a number of those and did exploration on a number of those looking for other deposits. I believe they didn't have that concept before they looked at Wilbur Hot Springs. I could be wrong.

Swent: Has it held in other places?

Stoehr: There are other hot spring deposits that have been found. It hasn't led to any great discoveries by Homestake.

Swent: No sure bonanza; they are hard to find.

We have voted, and this is 1980. I think November 1980 is when the board was presented with a request for a ten-million-dollar-plus expenditure for development.

Stoehr: Development drilling, trying to arrive at a feasibility study.

The Options in 1980: Size and Metallurgy of the Ore Body

Swent: What could have been the choices at that point? It is so hard to go back. We are looking at this with hind-sight, but there were a lot of options at that point that could have been followed.

Stoehr: The question was the size of the mine. A lot of drilling had to be done to try to determine the ore reserves. Then there were underground drifts run to try to get bulk samples to determine metallurgical characteristics. Early on it was determined that the ore was refractory in nature which meant it didn't yield its gold without some special treatments.

Swent: This wasn't a surprise that came to them later?

Stoehr: Early on they determined this. I guess they didn't know the extent, and how refractory it was until more tests were run. In '79 it was pretty clear it was a refractory ore and would have to be treated either by roasting or some new method which was later adopted--autoclaving, or the possibility of flotation and then sending the concentrates to a smelter. Various tests were done on these different methods. It appeared that it would be very difficult to permit a roaster in that area because you would be driving off the sulfur either into the atmosphere or into some kind of a method to catch it.

A lot of test work was necessary and the exploration continued, the drilling exploration continued, even when the underground exploration was done. It was pretty clear some time in the early eighties that there was a definite high grade core of the deposit which was penetrated by the underground workings. There was a question about the economics of the lower grade material in the fringes of the deposit.

Early on, the people that were in control of the project were looking at a very large-size project. I think they were talking early on about 2,000 tons a day, and later 3,000 tons a day, and a very large capital investment.

As the work was done it looked as though the autoclaving would probably be the answer, although test work had to be done and some technology had to be obtained from South Africa where they did the early test work on autoclaving. The investment risk was quite high, coupled with the larger tonnage and the new process, or untried process, in connection with a new deposit which no one thoroughly understood. It appeared as though it was a fairly big risk to proceed on that basis.

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Stoehr: During this whole period of '80 and '81 we were working up to trying to refine the various engineering criteria that were going to go into this feasibility study. It seemed to me that early on if we could gradually develop the property and the process without a great capital commitment, it would have been beneficial to do so. I came up with the idea that perhaps we could start out with a very small scale, say, like 500 tons a day, with capability of doubling it to 1,000 tons a day, and then talk about it as being a pilot plant. Perhaps it would have been easier to pass all the muster with the environmental and so forth because we wouldn't go in with such a big scale. We would mine the better grade deposit and perhaps start making profits and return our capital fairly quickly.

An Underground Mine Never Seriously Considered

Swent: What about the commitment to the open pit?

Stoehr: There could have been a small open pit. There was enough good grade that there could have been an open pit and an underground mine which, I think, as it turned out, could have been extremely profitable.

Swent: Was the underground mining option ever seriously considered?

Stoehr: Never seriously considered. At one time after it was put into production, Don Delicate and I looked at the idea of sinking a shaft and mining up to meet the open pit coming down, which would have saved an awful lot of stripping and would have gotten into some quite high grade to start with. Perhaps return of capital would have been higher. That was not seriously considered.

Swent: How did you present it?

Stoehr: We presented it as a thought to the Homestake management. They were so committed to large scale open pit that they somehow were going to mine it anyhow, by open pit. They are mining today, what we would have mined before.

Swent: You mean underground?

Stoehr: Where they are mining in the pit now. We would have had that mined by underground.

Swent: Why did this happen?

Stoehr: People have different thoughts. It is like anything, people have different thoughts and different ideas based on past experience.

Swent: Were there others on the board with underground mining experience?

Stoehr: Delicate was on the board then, I think. Langan wasn't on the board but his views were always appreciated. I think the management situation was in the hands of people that were primarily open pit people. Conger was primarily open pit; Humphrey was primarily open pit; Jack Thompson was primarily open pit. That was sort of the line of succession. They had the primary responsibility of developing this property, so I think there was hesitation to change their ideas.

Swent: The options were size and process--

The Possibility of Flotation Processing

Stoehr: Work was done on another possibility of decreasing the capital.
[Noise of explosions outside]

Swent: I guess we should explain it is Chinese New Year and we have some firecrackers in the background.

Stoehr: Another possibility of decreasing the capital was to just do a flotation concentrate and then ship the concentrates to a smelter. As I understood it, the test work indicated that we didn't get the recovery by that method that would make it successful, although we subsequently put a flotation unit in the McLaughlin mill and the recovery seems to be reasonable. This would have cut way back on the capital, and also way back on the environmental impacts. A flotation mill doesn't use the cyanide and doesn't take such a big plant. The McLaughlin plant as it was conceived early on was fairly complex in nature because it needed an oxygen plant to burn the sulphur. It was a fairly elaborate plant.

Swent: To put it mildly. You had mentioned that you took a trip to Africa.

Stoehr: Yes, and I am not certain just when that was.

Swent: You thought it was about 1980, perhaps.

Stoehr: I can't remember exactly when it was. I took Jim Anderson and Harry Conger down.

A Trip to Africa to See an Autoclave Plant

Swent: Had you been there before and seen this?


Stoehr: No. I had been to South Africa a number of times. I had heard of this plant that was an autoclave plant that was what they call the Afrikaaner Lease. That is just the name of the mine. The plant had been constructed and paid for by the Shah of Iran. Primarily it was to produce uranium and some gold. The process was the first real, full-scale autoclave plant for gold and uranium that I knew of. It had been developed by the Anglo-American people. They had pilot plants to develop this process. I was very interested in seeing this.

We made arrangements to have a look at it. We flew out from Johannesburg to, I believe, Welcome. We then had to helicopter out to the Afrikaaner Lease. Anglo sent a man from Johannesburg to accompany us. He obtained some keys to the plant. It was a brand new plant sitting there. It had never been turned on. We went in and there was dust on things but it was all brightly painted and had been sitting there for a few years because, as you know, something happened to the Shah of Iran.

Apparently they had spent his money doing this. This was advance payment for uranium that was to be produced. I guess the South Africans felt they shouldn't do anything with the asset until there was a resolution of the Shah's position. It was a very interesting thing to see. They had some different wrinkles than McLaughlin ended up with.

I felt that we should consider seeing if we could buy it and move it to McLaughlin, just as is, because it was all new. I toyed with the idea that maybe we could buy it for five million dollars and move it for five million dollars, but it was only 1,800 tons a day. By this time McLaughlin was looking at 3,000 tons a day. Here again, there wasn't really interest in this. I think there was more interest in Homestake in generating a new mine that was recognized as a real new development. It was just sort of a mind-set, to do it first-class.

Swent: When you went out there, had you had any thought that this would be available?



Stoehr: I was interested in seeing it. When I saw it, it was all brand new. It looked to me like an interesting thing. Whether we could have bought it, I don't know, but we did discuss, on that trip, the idea of getting technology from them, which we did. We actually had Anglo people on the McLaughlin job when we were setting it up, I think even starting it up. Just exactly what deal we made with them for the technology I don't recall.

Swent: Had this plant operated at all?

Stoehr: Never. Never turned on.

Swent: They didn't know whether it would work?

Stoehr: No, they had built it on the basis of the pilot plant.

Swent: Did you see the pilot plant?

Stoehr: No. Some other people from Homestake went down subsequent to that and looked at the pilot plant.

Swent: I think John Turney went down, didn't he?

Stoehr: Probably. Well, I am not sure if John did. Maybe.

Swent: I think he told me that he went.

Stoehr: I know he went later for several reasons.

Swent: Missed opportunities. And this was the combination of gold and uranium?

Stoehr: Yes.

Swent: They extracted both in the same--

Stoehr: They had uranium in their gold ore and almost all over in South Africa. Many of the gold plants recovered uranium also.

Swent: But you felt it could be adapted just for gold?

Stoehr: Yes, it was the same idea. The uranium and the gold were tied up in the sulfides. You had to oxidize the sulfides to oxides; that is what the autoclave did. It is interesting to note that there is uranium in almost all of the tailings in South Africa. If you have been to Johannesburg you will know that right in the middle of the city there are huge, huge piles of tailings. They aren't reclaimed as uranium tailings. I think there have been studies

made about radiation from those tailings. I don't think anybody has felt it is harmful.

Swent: They haven't blamed South Africa's problems on the uranium tailings?

Stoehr: No. Where do we go from here? I guess some other points of influence to McLaughlin.

Authorization of a Large Scale Project

Swent: Would you just like to sort of go through this exercise that you did with me the other day? It is always interesting to go back and look at things with hindsight, isn't it? The mine finally came in at 3,000 tons per day, didn't it?

Stoehr: That is right.

Swent: That was the base pace in the feasibility column.

Stoehr: Today it is 6,000 tons a day.

Swent: A big operation.

Stoehr: And a lot of money.

Swent: You have not mentioned it today, but the sheeted vein--

Stoehr: We found the sheeted vein when we went underground. That is when the idea appeared that it could possibly be mined in a high-grade fashion, on a smaller scale.

Swent: It is distinct from this finely disseminated ore.

Stoehr: Yes. There was a concentration of gold in quartz. A significant amount of the deposit occurred that way as high grade. Of course, when it is mined in a huge open pit, it comes out as all kinds of low grade. But by selective mining, both open pit and underground, a great deal of the gold--I don't know exactly how much; I did have a figure at one time--could have been produced from that deposit at a higher grade, which could have been quite profitable. Most of the profits in the deposit were in the higher grade.

Swent: You just said that this memo about the board meeting in the fall of 1980 is when the board voted ten-million-plus dollars to go

ahead with the development. You were on the board at that time but then you went off the board, I think, the following year. You continued to attend all the board meetings as senior consultant.

Stoehr: I don't think I went off then, did I? I knew that the other day when I looked up everything. Maybe I did.

Swent: Would you care to comment on that? I have a couple of the reports here, the 1980 report.

Stoehr: Here we are. I got a note here, "Stoehr off board, May 1980." When was this submitted to the board, that memo?

Swent: That was October 1980.

Stoehr: Do you have the 1980 report there?

Swent: I have the '80 report.

Stoehr: Let me look at it.

Swent: The motion was November 14, 1980.

Stoehr: All right, I was not on the board then.

Swent: "The following resolution is adopted unanimously, resolved that request for expenditure number EX80B1 by the exploration division for \$10,195,000 to conduct deposit development at the McLaughlin project be and hereby is approved."

Decision to be a Consultant Rather than a Director

Stoehr: My term at the board ended in May, 1980. I decided not to stand as a director and officer of the company at that time. I was asked to stay as a consultant to the chief executive officer, and I have done so since that date, even to today not as an employee, but as a consultant. The reason for that change was, I was asked to consider becoming president and succeeding to Paul Henshaw. I am not certain when that was, '78 or something like that. I declined to do that for personal reasons.

In 1980 there were quite a few changes made at Homestake. The organization was changed into divisions and this was in the wind in 1979, 1980. I felt that the best thing for me to do was to not be involved in the management, but only as an advisor. I had recommended that Mr. Conger be tapped as Mr. Henshaw's

successor. I had conversations with Mr. Conger and it was my feeling it would be better for him and for the company not to have differences of opinion on the board. I didn't feel that I should stay on the board and not give my opinions; he wanted me to stay on the board and stay as an officer. In fact, he at one time offered me the chief financial officer's job. I declined that too because I thought it was not wise to do that. I told him that I would be glad to stay under one circumstance and that would be if I could give him my opinions and he could do with them as he liked. That has been the relationship since that date.

Swent: Would you care to comment on what the differences of opinion were?

Stoehr: They are just professional differences of opinion. In the seventies when I was on the board, I had a reasonable relationship--a very good relationship--with the other directors. I didn't want to detract from Conger's position in any way. It is a very difficult position to be an employee and be on the board for a company, because if you disagree with your boss, why be a director? A director should be very independent and say what he thinks. I didn't feel that I wanted to be a director under the circumstances.

The Constraints on Inside Directors

Swent: This is an argument against inside directors.

Stoehr: I think that is true. I think it is very difficult to be an inside director. You support management or you don't stay on the board. If you are just going to be a "yes answer" man, you shouldn't be on the board. That is just my philosophy.

Swent: How often are there "no" people on the board, even from outside?

Stoehr: They were all outsiders, except Delicate.

Swent: Were they also different in opinions?

Stoehr: There were different opinions. Delicate was on the board. He had retired as former senior vice president. Henshaw was on the board, but--he was chairman of the board--his health was failing at that time. Don McLaughlin was still on the board; he was an emeritus. That is all the employees. I think the next year--I am not sure, do you have '81?

Swent: I have '81 here. I am just thinking, wondering if there was much--

Stoehr: See, by this time in '81--and this is when the changes were taking place, between '80 and '81--Jim Anderson had been put on the board; Bill Humphrey had been put on the board. Those two gentlemen were the ones that were pushing the McLaughlin project; they were leading that. Those changes were made. They were both inside people, employees.

Swent: Of the outside board directors, were there any of those that were less than enthusiastic about this?

Stoehr: I think in general there was quite a lot of enthusiasm for it. There were questions raised by John Kiely who was on the board; he was a Bechtel man. There were questions raised by Jim Salisbury, and general inquiries by some of the others. The board was basically going along with the management and following the management's suggestions. There was no great controversy on the board about this.

Swent: It gets a life of its own, doesn't it?

Stoehr: That's right. Fair enough; the board was looking to Harry Conger to run it. This is what Harry wanted to do. He had hired Jim Anderson and Humphrey to help him, and it was off to that direction.

The Most Important Factor: The Gold Price

Swent: I was interested in this feasibility study. I am very grateful to you for letting me see this.

Stoehr: I wonder if we shouldn't go to the most important thing in McLaughlin at the time before this report. The most important thing with regard to the success, failure, or what we should do at McLaughlin, was the price of gold. You will recall--I think we have a chart here. We are now dealing--during the prospecting at McLaughlin in '78, the price of gold roughly moved from \$200 an ounce to \$230 an ounce. Then, in 1979, right while we are considering McLaughlin, the price shoots up from \$230 and you actually hit \$525--something in that order. You could check that exact price.

There was a high degree of interest in what was happening at McLaughlin. Early in '80 the price actually went as high as \$840

or \$860; I can't recall exact figures. You can see that the decisions were clouded. Looking at this whole thing politically, in the late seventies, certainly through this period we had the Carter administration in Washington. People were losing confidence in the dollar. In 1974, Americans were allowed to own gold. They began exercising that right to own gold by buying coins and demanding gold and trading their dollars for gold because they feared that the dollar was really in serious trouble.

President Reagan's Gold Commission; Advising Member Arthur Castamagna ##

Stoehr: There was very high inflation. Mr. Reagan was campaigning in, I believe '79.

Swent: The election was '80.

Stoehr: During his campaign he mentioned gold several times, and he got a very positive reaction from the audiences. Prior to the election he advised that if he were elected he would set up a gold commission to study the matter of gold. And he was elected in 1980 and he did set up the commission to study gold. He appointed a gentleman by the name of Arthur Castamagna who was living in Santa Rosa at the time. I guess Reagan knew Art Castamagna from his stint as governor of California. Art actually was in the state administration. He is a lawyer and a broker, a very down-to-earth fellow.

He at one time was quite active in trading gold shares. Beside Art Castamagna, who was one representative of the public, Reagan appointed three members of his administration and Don Regan, who was secretary of treasury, was to head the commission. He also appointed three members of the Federal Reserve Board. It seems to me that there were some other appointees I have forgotten right now. It was a blue-ribbon commission. During, I believe it was '81, they met every month throughout the year. They called in people from all over the world to give their opinions on gold use in the monetary system.

I offered my services to Mr. Castamagna the day when this came out, this commission was appointed, and I saw the names on the list and that this fellow Castamagna in Santa Rosa was named as a public representative. I called him up in Santa Rosa and asked him if I could come up and buy him a cup of coffee.

Swent: Had you known him?

Stoehr: I hadn't known him. He was a complete stranger. I said, "I would like to offer my services as your staff. No pay, I just want to see that somebody gets straight facts. And I would be happy to do research for you and everything else." We hit it off right away and I did do that. I went to all of the commission hearings in Washington and helped what I could to bring facts to the commission.

Swent: What sort of facts?

Stoehr: Facts about either mining or whatever facts--facts. I didn't want to see something happen that wasn't based on something solid. They had open hearings. The public was invited to these hearings. They were held in the treasury. They had minutes of the meetings. They had various people give speeches at these meetings. I ended up with a file full of these papers. The only private discussions the commission had were at lunch. And Castamagna used to tell me what happened at lunch, but there was no public invited to these lunches.

There were two factions on the commission. One faction was: gold is a barbarous metal, it isn't good for anything. It is the same philosophy Lenin had, which is sort of a socialistic or communistic philosophy. The other faction was: gold is a discipline on the monetary system and should be utilized as such or otherwise government would just print so much paper that it would be worthless. From those two opposing views there was on one hand the, let's say, socialists wanted to sell off the gold that the government had and be done with it. The government had 274 million ounces of gold in the stocks at that time. The hard-money people wanted to make gold the basis of the whole currency system.

During this period, when these commission hearings were being held, the government started tightening up on the money supply. There was a slowing of inflation, a clearly perceptible slowing of inflation. This commission met and met and no one seemed to see any way to get these two opposing sides together. But there was one area where there appeared to be a chance of solution. The American people were buying lots of krugerrands, and lots of Canadian maple leaves, and gold coins of every sort. The socialist soft-money people didn't see any harm in the government minting coins and selling them in competition with especially South Africa. They really didn't want to do anything to help South Africa, and this would have been competition. The hard-money people wanted coins as a basis for our currency system. So they were in favor of that.

I went out and bought four one-ounce gold coins, kruggerand and maple leaf. I still have them, and what they call an arts medallion. I took an old twenty-dollar gold piece from the United States, double eagle, which was minted up to the thirties. It is a beautiful coin. I gave them to Art Castamagna and I said, "Now, at your lunch pass these around to all the people at your lunch table that are on the commission." He was very much in favor of that. We kind of schemed it up together.

He would say, "Wouldn't it be nice if the United States could have a very nice, attractive coin like this old one that we used to produce in competition with the krugerrand?" He did that.

They went around the table and one of the leading members of the Federal Reserve Bank said as they went around, "I have never held a gold coin before." He held it for some time and examined it. Art sort of felt that he was quite interested. Other people showed some interest and some showed little interest.

Art then arranged for me to have an appointment with a fellow by the name of Anderson, who was then domestic policy advisor to Reagan. He had an office in the White House near the Oval Office. I went in to see him and took my four little gold coins and set them on the table in his office. He had a beautiful polished cherry table he was using as a desk.

Stoehr Suggests Minting the Gold Eagle Coin

Stoehr: I said to Anderson, "The three representatives from the administration have never said anything on the commission, and you are now ten meetings into it. It looks like it is going to be a complete fiasco unless something comes out. I really believe that one thing would be accepted by everybody if it was presented by the administration. That is an American gold coin. It should be one ounce. It should not have a denomination on it. It should match the old double eagle because it is a beautiful coin and everybody likes it."

He was quite intrigued. I had heard that he was kind of interested in gold and I could see he was quite intrigued; he spent a lot more time with me than I had anticipated. I thought I would go in for five minutes and get out, but he spent quite a bit of time and wanted to talk about the idea. During the process of talking about this, he picked up one of the coins--it was a kruggerand--he held it in his hand. He was looking at it, examining it. At about a foot above the table he dropped it. It

came down on its edge and it made a big impression--a dent in the cherry table. He never lost his composure. He just took the coin and covered up the dent and went on talking.

We had this conversation about the administration adopting this coin as a solution. As I got ready to leave, I said, "One thing I know, I have left an impression in the White House." The impression [dent] on the table, of course.

The next meeting of the commission, Don Regan came out for the coin. That is what the commission finally adopted. It is the American eagle coin. Within a few years they had sold five million of them--or minted five million of them. It was quite a large amount of gold. People are able to buy them even today, at gold price--just slightly above gold price.

The marketing of the coin by the treasury has not been well done or otherwise there would have been a lot more circulated. In the process of getting it through Congress, they made a couple of other errors. They substituted for that nice eagle on the back of the double eagle, a family of eagles. It looks like a mess with eaglets in the nest, mother eagle, and a father eagle. It is just stupid.

And then somebody had the bright idea of putting fifty-dollar denomination on a one-ounce coin which further spoiled it. But anybody with any interest in gold knows that an ounce of gold is an ounce of gold, whether it has eaglets on it or not. They do put the date on it and "In God We Trust." That was part of the bill.

Ending up: the question was whether the Reagan administration was going to be able to stop the inflation and tighten up the money supply and get us back on some kind of a solid basis or was the gold price going to go hog wild again, and go up to thousands of dollars an ounce. People were predicting that it might go to two thousand dollars an ounce or something like that. It went down substantially and all the way until 1982.

About mid-1982, just about the time that the feasibility study of McLaughlin was approved, the gold price was down in the range of three hundred dollars. I am not sure, maybe it says exactly what the gold price is.

The Feasibility Study Uses Over-optimistic Figures

Swent: They used \$475 as their base.

Stoehr: The reason they did that was because they needed \$475 to make it feasible. By 1983--say mid-1982--the gold price started up. By 1983 it was right about \$500 an ounce. I think when this feasibility study was considered, the gold price was going up. I guess people were thinking that the Reagan administration was going to fail in its control of the money supply and the gold price was going to go much higher.

Swent: It peaked in 1980, then went down and hit another spike early in '83.

Stoehr: Yes, but you see, the low was just as McLaughlin was being considered. It had started up by the time that was approved. In fact, you may have been on that steep curve. You would have to look at the exact dates to see just exactly where it was. All this had an influence, of course.

Swent: It is starting up and you can hope that it will go back up to \$800.

Stoehr: I had forgotten that this was done at \$475 gold; I think we had a \$400 case in there.

Swent: They used three different prices as I recall. The final base case assumption was commodity prices at \$600 and gold at \$400.

Stoehr: They did two--one at \$600 gold and one at \$400 gold. Those are the cases they did. They did them at 3,000 tons a day.

Swent: At that time, did \$400 seem conservative?

Stoehr: I don't think so. \$400 gave you a discounted rate of return of 13 percent, which is about the minimum you want. You basically needed \$400 gold in this study to justify the investment.

Swent: In actual fact the price had not been \$400 for a couple of years. Is that right?

Stoehr: That is right.

Stoehr: Yes. I recall somebody doing some averaging. Over the past few years it has averaged something, to sort of say--I can't recall, but there were some averaging thoughts that went into this. At that time the capital costs were estimated to be \$195 million.

Swent: That is the total investment?

Stoehr: Capital, yes.

Swent: What were interest rates doing in those days?

Stoehr: They were coming down and I don't recall--they used an escalated cost of 5 percent a year. I can't recall what the interest rates were. That does have a big influence on what you use for criteria for investment.

- Swent: It must be in there.

Stoehr: I don't think they would have put it in the study. One of the questions was raised at that time--maybe it is better to keep McLaughlin ore body in the ground and see if Reagan was going to win or not--win against inflation. If he would win it would be better off in the ground.

Swent: You don't mean win the election, you mean win the battle--

Stoehr: Win the battle with inflation. Not a lot of serious thought was given to that, but it was a reasonable position. Of course, the Homestake stock was somewhat following the gold price. The stockholders were very excited about a new mine. The stockholders had bought Homestake stock because they thought the gold price was going to go up. They quite rightly wanted Homestake to get new mines. This was a big, new mine with a lot of optical appeal. The project was approved; this feasibility study was approved. I don't know exactly when, but I guess maybe your chart will tell you the exact date.

Swent: It was placed into deposit development in 1981. The feasibility report was '82. The permits were filed in August of '82. The contract for design engineering was let in June of '82.

Stoehr: I would say that the contract let for engineering probably was the date--it was probably approved by the board sometime between March, when this was submitted, and June. There was a large commitment made in June to go ahead with the engineering.

Swent: Do mining companies do this very often? Do they sometimes get partway on a project and then decide to leave it in the ground?

Stoehr: Oh, sure. It is always a possibility. In fact, I think that there was a question about this date. When the plant was finished--actually completed and ready to turn on--it must have been in early '85. The price of gold in '85 was a low of \$300 and a high of about \$340, therefore, it looked like Reagan was

winning. If you look at the chart, it hit \$500 in '83 and then went down, down, down, down all the time McLaughlin was being constructed. When it got ready to turn on, the actual capital cost was quite a bit higher than they originally estimated, as it turned out. It didn't look profitable the day it started. Of course, with the down trend in gold prices over two years it didn't look good at all.

Swent: The average then was \$317.

Stoehr: I am in '85, just a minute. The first gold poured in March of '85. That is almost a low point.

Swent: Right. The average was \$317 at that point.

Stoehr: Yes, for that year.

Swent: That was the low of the year, early in the year.

Stoehr: With the higher capital cost of the overruns we experienced, it looked like we were going to lose money, especially when you don't look at the rest of the gold curve that has gone down for two and a half years. It looked like Mr. Reagan was winning the war and it might go back to \$35. At that time the question was raised that maybe we have it constructed and ready to go and just keep it, not burn up the ore reserves at a loss.

Stoehr Suggests Waiting for a Better Gold Price

Swent: This was seriously proposed?

Stoehr: I seriously proposed it.

Swent: To whom?

Stoehr: To the gentleman I worked for.

Swent: Mr. Conger.

Stoehr: Mr. Conger toyed with the idea. I don't know how much he discussed it with the board. I felt it was kind of an interesting position to take because you are all set to go; it doesn't cost much to hang on, and if the price goes up you are immediately able to take advantage of the situation. If it goes down you don't burn up your ore reserves for losses. You might say that, in a way, even at \$315 or \$317 there was some cash. You could return

some cash from each ton you would mine even at that price, but you didn't make any profits.

Swent: What was the break-even price?

Stoehr: You mean on a cash basis?

Swent: It was \$287, wasn't it?

Stoehr: In September of '82 I made a little study myself. I don't know if we covered this the other day or not. I found my notes from that study. I felt that the estimated grade turned out in the study was actually overstated and that the recovery was too high in the test work.

##

Stoehr: And making adjustments for that, in my judgment, I felt that the break-even price, so that you would obtain the 14 percent return that had been calculated--

Swent: That is 14 percent of what?

Stoehr: That is return on investment. I am not explaining this very well.

Swent: I was thinking of the recovery. And 14 percent return on it was--

Stoehr: The plan was, they were going to get 14 percent return on investment at \$400 gold. In my calculations, in my study, and my adjustments and so forth, I had made this calculation that you needed \$576 gold for 14 percent return. That was in September of '82.

Swent: This was presented in March of '82.

Stoehr: By the time we got to starting up the place in '85 and we had \$317 gold, it didn't look very hopeful. It seemed to me the best thing we could do was tell the shareholders that we spent the money and are ready to go when the price of gold goes up. We are not going to waste any ore reserves and so forth. But the momentum was too great to adopt that philosophy: we started up and very fortunately the gold price went up. It never did attain my figure of \$575 on average, and hasn't throughout the life of McLaughlin. And consequently, the return on investment has been minimal.

However, it has produced a lot of jobs and has been a very nice mine. It has done a lot for the shareholders and they have the comfort of having this nice big mine. The technology that was developed there was a superior, beautiful job. The environmental

work that has been done in connection with McLaughlin has helped the mining industry because such a good job was done. It is really and truly a showcase.

Swent: I was thinking on the social aspect of this, which does have to be weighed in strongly, if you at that point decide to hold it and not open it, you have hundreds of people employed up there.

Stoehr: They weren't before it started. It was a construction--

Swent: Right, there is a moment at which you can--

Stoehr: There were some people there. There would have been some dislocation.

Swent: The construction people were expecting to move on anyway, I suppose.

Stoehr: Yes, a major share of construction people.

Swent: It would take you a while to tool up to open. You can't just--

Stoehr: Yes, it took a while to open.

Swent: But there is an optimum point there where you could do this without too much pain.

Thoughts on Leaving Reserves Unmined

Stoehr: Yes. I think the same thing about Lead. Lead had all the ore reserves they burned up at \$35--wonderful ore bodies at no profit. If they had maintained the ore reserve and mined it when it was profitable, it would have been a huge difference. However, Lead would have suffered, the whole community would have suffered a great deal if there was a shutdown. But mines do that. They shut down, waiting for changing economic times.

Swent: I guess this is one of the things--in totalitarian countries, they will keep something going at a loss.

Stoehr: That is right. It is not a free-market society.

Swent: No.

Stoehr: They mine and mine and mine. Somebody from Moscow told them to mine.

Swent: Right, whether or not they are making profit.

Stoehr: It is senseless, some things. Well, I guess we've done it.

Swent: Did you cover all that you wanted to on this?

Stoehr: Yes, thoughts on leaving reserves unmined, that is the last point.

Further Risks: Pit Slopes, Separation of Solids and Liquids,
Increased Taxes

Swent: Did you say all that you wanted to about this analysis of the feasibility study?

Stoehr: In the feasibility study--I had made some notes on this one I gave you. One of the big risks was the pit slopes. The McLaughlin deposit is in some fairly unstable ground. It appeared as though they might have some problems with the slope of the pit and slides.

Swent: Have they had problems?

Stoehr: Yes, this year they have had a lot of rain. They are down at the maximum pit depths now. I also felt that there was a problem with separating liquid and solid. I just wrote down the risk when they were considering some of the risks: the risk of higher taxes by California. [There was] some concern about the metallurgy, although there had been quite a bit of pilot plant work done. Then of course there was still the permitting risk and the possibility that California would require filling the pit and handling the waste rock water runoff that might be acidic. All of those things were generally solved. The pit slope still is a problem when it is wet. It just adds to the cost. They haven't had any great disasters out there. I guess that is all.

Swent: Were you involved at all in the negotiations with the Gambles?

Stoehr: I guess from the beginning, when Homestake acquired the property in the area, they acquired quite a large amount of property because they didn't know eventually where they might find additional ore that could be fed to the plant.

Swent: That's a point we missed, too, the nervousness about acquisitions.

Stoehr: Yes. Let's go back. When the discovery was first made, Mr. Henshaw was very insistent that it be kept as quiet as possible

and as much property be gathered together, because once it appeared after this drilling--this air track drilling--that it was probably a deposit that could be mined, he insisted that Jim Anderson spend a good deal of time and effort to try to acquire other properties in the area that might prove to have gold on them.

They did put together a large package of properties, but they were never able to get one property that was very close to the deposit and that was what they call the Gamble Ranch. It was a large ranch owned by heirs of the Gambles of Procter and Gamble. Various people negotiated for it. There was just no interest on the Gambles in selling the property.

Swent: Were they mining at all at the time?

Stoehr: There had been mercury mining done on the property. In fact, fairly sizable mercury mining on the property. Actually, the Manhattan Mine was on their property. A little town of Manhattan was on their property. It wasn't a town any more, just the foundations.

Swent: Knoxville.

Stoehr: Knoxville, yes. It is Knoxville, not Manhattan. Knoxville is the name of the town.

Swent: Were they mining it at this time?

Stoehr: No, there was no mining going on. They were mainly in the cattle business and--sometime, and I can't remember when it was now--must have been late eighties, sometime in the late eighties, Mr. Conger asked me to see what I could do about getting the Gamble property. I negotiated about a year with them and finally was able to arrange a purchase.

Swent: Who were you working with?

Stoehr: There were two Gamble brothers: one, Launce Gamble, and one, George Gamble. George Gamble lived out on the ranch. Launce was in town here. They appointed a lawyer that we were to do most of our discussions with. It turned out that Launce and I did a lot of the discussions.

Swent: Who was the lawyer?

Stoehr: I can't recall the lawyer.

Swent: John McMeekin?

Stoehr: Yes, that is right. McMeekin, that is name of the guy. We had several conversations. McMeekin and I had several conversations.

Swent: Is Launce Gamble himself a lawyer?

Stoehr: I believe so. Anyhow, we had lots of fun--delightful people to deal with.

Swent: But they didn't want to sell.

Stoehr: They didn't want to sell. We were finally able to arrange a transaction which they felt very good about and Homestake felt pretty good about it. Homestake's price was about half as much as was authorized. Gambles had done some drilling on their property and wouldn't tell us the result of the drill holes until the deal was made. When we handed them the check they, of course, handed us the results of the drill holes which were, as we realized. The only reason you wouldn't give them to the purchaser is if there wasn't anything in them, however, they drilled in different areas. We knew where they drilled and were not really too concerned, assuming they were negative.

We did have ore holes practically on the property line. There was some ore on the Gamble property--fairly limited in scope, but there were high hopes when the property was acquired.

Swent: You actually bought a piece of their land, did you?

Stoehr: We bought the whole ranch, and Homestake now owns the ranch. Homestake then subsequently did a lot of drilling over there and I don't know what results they got.

When we were buying the property we ran into a fairly sizable environmental problem in that someone had dumped a lot of mercury batteries in an old open pit and tailings dump there, so the Gambles had to get that all cleaned up before we bought it. They actually had to haul stuff away to hazardous waste sites. It cost them a bit of money to do that.

It was an effort to try to expand the McLaughlin reserves, and as I say, I have never looked into the results of the Homestake drilling.

Swent: Obviously they haven't put a mine there.

Stoehr: I think they may have mined the corner of it. There were other considerations too. There were dump sites that they used that might save money--

Swent: Were they reprocessing batteries there?

Stoehr: Yes, they did.

Swent: I think this is what Wilder had been doing, hadn't he?

Stoehr: I think there had been some reprocessing of batteries done on the McLaughlin property.

Swent: The Reed Mine was another one.

Stoehr: Yes, I didn't have anything to do with the Reed Mine. That was actually, I think, acquired somewhat before the Gamble property.

Swent: That is the only one you were involved in?

Stoehr: Just the Gamble.

Swent: That was a long one.

Stoehr: Long discussion, yes. Long negotiation because there had been so many attempts. And there were various prices suggested which were much higher than what we actually paid, and people had their hopes up. We did an exchange with them. We bought some other property and exchanged it for this ranch, which helped them in their tax situation. Mr. Dennis Goldstein, Homestake's lawyer, played an important role in this transaction. He worked extremely hard to get the deal done.

Swent: I believe they are still ranching up there.

Stoehr: They had two ranches up there. The one we purchased was their north ranch. They operate a ranch that is down on Lake Berryessa.

Swent: Is your time getting short?

Stoehr: I have a lunch date.

Swent: Are there other things, Dick, that you wanted to say?

Stoehr: I don't know what else you want.

Swent: I just want you to feel that you have said your say. This is your chance at history. You have other activities--directorships and so forth. Would you like to comment on the reclamation at Grants?

Stoehr: I don't know where you are going. You want McLaughlin; you don't want all this junk in there.

Swent: We cast a wide net, as we say.

Stoehr: You have my activity stuff, so you know what other directorships I have.

Swent: Do you have the Sante Fe one on there? That is a new one.

Stoehr: Probably not.

Swent: You have just returned from a meeting in Albuquerque with Santa Fe Gold.

Stoehr: Santa Fe Pacific Gold Corporation, one name. I would like to get them to change it to Santa Fe Gold. It turns out that Homestake owns that name, so there are negotiations going on now so Homestake will give up that name.

A Visit to the Reclamation at Ambrosia Lake

Swent: So you just went out to Ambrosia Lake and saw that there wasn't a sign of all of the work that went on there?

Stoehr: Mr. Conger asked me to go out and have a look at the reclamation work that was going on at the uranium mines and mills near Grants. I spent time looking at the Homestake activities, their reclamation work, what was formally a Kerr-McGee operation--now owned by Quivira Mining Company--and had a tour of their facilities and inspected what they were doing. Then I looked at Anaconda's properties, and had a tour of their reclamation work and learned a lot. I learned that there is about \$165 million being spent in the area on reclamation, mostly involving the mill tailings of each of those sites.

One other property, it was formerly the Phillips mill, is being reclaimed by the government at a tremendous cost. For instance, Kerr-McGee property had 33 million tons of tailings on it and they believe that their total reclamation costs will be about \$20 million. The Phillips property that the government is reclaiming had one and a half million tons of tailings on it. The estimate is that the government has already spent \$45 million on it, and it's not completed yet. That is the kind of stuff that is going on.

In the government operation, people are running around there in the desert with white suits on, gloves, and masks and things, and radiation is probably not much over background. It is very

costly. The contractor is making a great deal of money on that one.

Swent: You said you couldn't even recognize the places which you--

Stoehr: Yes, at the Homestake mines, back in 1956 I had originally located the shaft sites of three of Homestake's large mines: sections 32, 23, and 25. I had driven the stakes in the ground before anything was there. I went out and looked at these sites. They were so reclaimed that I couldn't find out where the shafts were. It looks much nicer than it did when I went out there in 1956 to locate the shafts.

Swent: Nicer in what sense?

Stoehr: In those days there were mud ruts all over, there was no road to drive on, and there was sage brush all over--wind-blown drifts. Now it is seeded down, it is green. It has a nice black-top road out there. You can't find out where the shafts were. Everything is cleaned up, and there are a few trees. It is the only way you can kind of ever tell there is something strange there. At Section 32 they planted one tree, and it is there. At Section 23 there are several trees.

The Kerr-McGee mill is still standing. The Anaconda mill is all gone; they buried it. The Homestake mill is all gone; they buried it. Homestake is in the process of scooping up wind-blown dust, acres and acres around there. They are just about finished. They have a big rock quarry. And all four companies--all four projects are using the same rock quarry, which is quarrying rock that is going to cover all of those tailings so they don't blow away; big project. Actually, it is going to look very nice. It looks much better than the Russian uranium mines, which are in horrible shape. The Russian mines were similar to what we have in Ambrosia.

Comparison with Tailings Disposal in Uzbekistan

Swent: Where are these? Have you seen the Russian mines?

Stoehr: I have seen the ones in Uzbekistan and East Germany. There is a uranium mine in Uzbekistan that is probably about the size of all Ambrosia Lake mines put together. And they mined it open pit, which we probably would have done if it had been state-owned. They have three billion tons of tailings sitting around in ugly

looking piles right in a town, right among them. It is really a mess.

Swent: Do you think it is hazardous?

Stoehr: I don't know. Probably not from the radiation, but I think they have problems with their domestic water. They have kids swimming in a little lake they made out of mine water. They have a long way to go to come anywhere near close to what has been done in this country for environmental protection.

- Swent: Is there anything else you want to say?

Stoehr: I guess not. I enjoyed the interview.

Swent: Thank you very much. It is certainly generous of you to give so much time, and I appreciate it.

Stoehr: I will be interested in reading about McLaughlin from all angles.

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Western Mining in the Twentieth Century Series
Knoxville/McLaughlin Project

Joseph Strapko

EXPLORATION GEOLOGIST, McLAUGHLIN MINE DISCOVERY, 1978

An Interview Conducted by
Eleanor Swent
in 1995

Since 1954 the Regional Oral History Office has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the Nation. Oral history is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is indexed, bound with photographs and illustrative materials, and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Joseph Strapko dated July 19, 1995. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. No part of the manuscript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

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INTERVIEW HISTORY--Joseph Strapko

Joseph Strapko, a geologist on the Homestake Mining Company team when gold was located at the Manhattan Mine, was recommended for interviewing by Henry Colen, an advisor to the mining series who is also a former Homestake vice president. This suggestion led to a prolonged hunt which reveals a lot about the life of an exploration geologist.

With Colen's help I was able to trace Joe Strapko to North Carolina and then to Scarborough, Maine; he was out "in the field," and we communicated at times through his friends in New Hampshire where he kept his truck, or through his brother in Minnesota, or through a mailing address in Reno, Nevada. I was in Maine in June of 1995, and we planned to meet there, but by then he was working in central Nevada. At last he came to Piedmont and we interviewed at my home on July 19 and 20, 1995.

Strapko tells of going to Beloit College in Wisconsin and finding a way to combine his love of the outdoors and concern for the environment:

I went on a field trip, about a two or three-week field trip to the Appalachians. And after that I was hooked....I was a dedicated geology major.

He was hired by Homestake in 1975 as a geologic field assistant for six months, working on a drilling project near Breckenridge, Colorado. Then he was sent to Lead, South Dakota, to work as a stope geologist in the Homestake Mine; from there he went to then Centennial Mine, Upper Peninsula, Michigan, where he logged core. In the fall of 1977 he transferred to Nevada to work for Donald Gustafson on the mercury hot springs project searching for gold.

Strapko is somewhat skeptical of geologic theoretical models. He says:

After they found the deposit, there was an attempt by Homestake to make it sound as though this was a very high-tech effort....they did come up with a very good model of the McLaughlin deposit, but it was well after it was found....you just went for mercury deposits and took samples and analyzed them for gold. And really that's the way exploration goes. You have a rough idea, a rough model, but it's not that sophisticated. That's the type of talk and something you send out for stockbrokers. You project this high-tech image so they believe that you'll continue to find things. If they realized how hit-and-miss it was, you probably could never raise money for a mining venture.

In his oral history, he gives a step-by-step account of the McLaughlin exploration process: "I was doing reconnaissance. I was in seventh heaven." Recalling it after fifteen years, he remembers the disappointment of the Cherry Hill project, followed by the exhilaration of the sampling at the Manhattan Mine and the negotiations with Bill Wilder, its owner. He pays tribute to Wilder's mechanical inventiveness and the riches of his "boneyard".

Strapko left the project in 1979 and feels he was the one who really "found" the gold which resulted in the McLaughlin Mine. When the development drilling began, he says:

The first hole was in the middle of the ore body. That was, as far as I'm concerned, about as good as you can get. You know, that discovery hole was essentially the first hole. Which was my hole. I'll always be really proud of that number one hole in the middle of the ore body.

His story adds greatly to the value of this oral history project, and we are sincerely thankful to include it.

The tapes of the interview were transcribed in the Regional Oral History Office and the lightly edited transcript was sent to Joseph Strapko for review in November 1997. He was working at the time in Latin America, and only occasionally picking up mail at an address in Reno. He did not respond to pleas to return the transcript, so we present it without any changes he might have made. The manuscript was indexed at our office. The tapes are deposited in The Bancroft Library and are available for study. [Just as the volume was being completed, I heard from Joseph Strapko, who returned to the States after several years as a geologist in Nicaragua and now works in a computer software business in New Hampshire.]

The Joseph Strapko interview is one of more than forty interviews which were conducted by the Regional Oral History Office from 1993-1998 in order to document the development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Knoxville District of Lake, Napa, and Yolo Counties, California, from 1978-1998, as part of the ongoing oral history series devoted to Western Mining in the Twentieth Century. The Regional Oral History Office was established in 1954 to record the lives of persons who have contributed significantly to the history of California and the West. The office is a division of The Bancroft Library and is under the direction of Willa K. Baum.

Eleanor Swent, Project Director, Research Interviewer/Editor
Regional Oral History Office

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Joseph Dean Strapko

Date of birth 7/6/51 Birthplace Watertown, Wisconsin

Father's full name Steven Strapko

Occupation Auto Mechanic Birthplace Dodge Center Minnesota

Mother's full name Jane Strapko

Occupation Homemaker Birthplace Clamont Minnesota

Your spouse —

Occupation — Birthplace —

Your children —

Where did you grow up? Milwaukee Wisconsin

Present community Reno Nevada

Education BA Geology, Beloit College 1975

MBA University of North Carolina Chapel Hill 1986

Occupation(s) Geologist

Areas of expertise Mineral Exploration

Other interests or activities —

Organizations in which you are active Maine Mineral Resource Association (dired
Society of Economic Geologists, Prospectors & Developers Association

INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH STRAPKO

EXPLORATION GEOLOGIST, McLAUGHLIN MINE DISCOVERY, 1978

[Interview 1: July 19, 1995] ##¹

Wisconsin Childhood

Swent: Let's just begin by having you tell about your early background-- where you were born and when, and where you went to school. Where were you born?

Strapko: I was born just outside of Milwaukee, a small town, Watertown, Wisconsin, 1951.

Swent: Let's get the exact date, please.

Strapko: July 6.

Swent: Oh, you just had a birthday.

Strapko: Yes, I did.

Swent: And were your parents both from Wisconsin?

Strapko: No. They were actually both from Minnesota, a small farming community south of Minneapolis--Claremont, Dodge Center. When my grandmother first went down to southern Wisconsin, we sort of had two enclaves, one just south of Minneapolis and one just southwest of Milwaukee. My parents were down in Wisconsin when I was born and moved to Milwaukee, so everything I can remember from my early life is being in Milwaukee, in the city.

Swent: Did you have grandparents near there that you visited?

¹## This symbol indicates that a tape or tape segment has begun or ended. A guide to the tapes follows the transcript.

Strapko: Oh, yes. And both of them in farming communities. I only had two grandparents alive that I remember. One, on my mother's side, had a small--not a real farm, but she had animals and lived out in the country. And my grandfather on my father's side had a small truck farm in Minnesota. And we would visit both of them. It was very different from our life, which was all city.

Swent: You sound as if you liked it.

Strapko: Oh, yes. It was something very different, to go from the city to being out into these small farming areas. And the animals at my grandmother's house--she would go through various types of animals that she would have. At one time she had rabbits. She had a few and didn't keep them separate, and then she had rabbits all over! And then, of course, killed them all, butchered them and would give us rabbits to eat. She had chickens at times. She had goats. For a while she had horses.

My grandfather actually died when I was thirteen or fourteen, but we would go up there. And he had some great vegetables up there. The other thing I remember was my dad was not a big hunter, but my grandfather had guns, so when I was twelve or thirteen he took me out shooting, which was a big thing for a young man.

Swent: What were you shooting?

Strapko: Tin cans or something. Nothing live. [chuckles] My dad didn't like hunting; we would go fishing.

Swent: You told me about your family vacations.

Strapko: Yes, well, both my grandparents would be in more farming type settings, whereas for vacation every year my dad wanted to go up to northern Wisconsin and either get a cabin or we would camp out by lakes and go fishing. We'd do that for two weeks in the summer every year.

That was really one of the things that eventually got me interested in geology; not the interesting rocks that I saw when I was out in the woods, but the idea of working in the outdoors was one of the major factors for me getting into geology. The other was that Beloit College had an outstanding geology department.

Swent: How did you happen to go to Beloit?

Strapko: My big brother went to Beloit. I looked at University of Wisconsin and Beloit College. And I went to the University of

Wisconsin and it was a huge school. I felt lost; I felt intimidated. And then I went down to Beloit. It was a very small school, about 2,000 students. And, of course, my brother was there. I just felt more comfortable.

Swent: Where did you go to high school?

Strapko: In Milwaukee.

Swent: A big high school?

Strapko: Yes, a big high school. As a matter of fact, the high school was as big as Beloit. There were about 2,000 students there. It was in the city of Milwaukee. The schools were kind of big and overcrowded. [chuckles]

Swent: Complete city experience, then. So at Beloit you took geology.

Beloit College, Geology Major

Strapko: Beloit. When I went there, I was really strong in math and science, but I had never taken earth science. Did that on the recommendation of my brother. I was taking calculus and was doing fine in it, but I didn't like it. The professors were hard to get a hold of. And the geology department, the subject was interesting, the professors were excited about it, and the head of our department required them to be in their offices between eight and five when they were not teaching a course, so they were incredibly accessible. And that combination of things: that I enjoyed it and then the thought of working outside--you know, as a living, getting paid for that sounded so wonderful. I just got sucked right in.

After my first year, I went on a field trip, about a two or three-week field trip to the Appalachians. And after that I was hooked.

Swent: Where in the Appalachians?

Strapko: Southern Appalachians in the Carolinas--Smoky Mountain National Park--just all through the area looking at geology. After two semesters at Beloit, after that field trip, I was a dedicated geology major.

Swent: Would you like to name some of your teachers?

Strapko: Oh, yes. Dr. Henry Woodard, who was the head of the department, was the one that sort of set up that philosophy of all the professors being accessible. And Dr. Richard Stenstrom, Ray Wright, and John Burger. That was our geology department. They were all excellent and a very big influence on me.

Turtle Creek Watershed Studies

Swent: Did you have any sort of specialty as an undergraduate? Did you do a project?

Strapko: Well, I did a couple of projects. I did a National Science Foundation--actually, two National Science Foundation projects. One was a study on watershed. We actually measured stream flow and analyzed water. What we were going to do was look at the effects of the spring runoff and possibly fertilizer from farms getting in. We had a new atomic absorption unit, and the professor, Dr. Stenstrom, had an interest in that area, so he helped us set up the project. And it became the first part of an ongoing project in that watershed.

Swent: Which watershed was it?

Strapko: Turtle Creek watershed.

Swent: Was it near Beloit?

Strapko: Oh, yes. So we would go out. And it seemed a disaster from the beginning because--well, it was designed very well for us to start in the winter time, when there was very low runoff, and end in the spring, when all this water was coming off, to see the changes in the composition of the water. Well, in the Midwest you normally have a fairly cold winter and then spring. Well, that year we got 60 degree days in January. The [water] flow was much higher in January, and it just fluctuated so much. It was not a normal year for looking at a curve from low water flow to high water flow, but we collected our data every day and did our project and wrote a report on it.

Swent: You learned about some of the hazards of predicting!

Strapko: Yes, so now it's part of a database that has grown. I should ask them how that project has continued, whether he has found anything significant that started from our little project.

Environmental Education Project, Lake Michigan

Swent: You said you had two.

Strapko: Yes. The other one was before my mining days. I was an environmentalist, and it was called Environ-Van. My partner and I went around Lake Michigan and we lectured to the high school students about the environment. We took the Lake Michigan area, so we had a number of things that we looked at in terms of affecting Lake Michigan. We had a general part of the talk and then also specific things for Lake Michigan. Lectured to high school students, just to try to get them interested in the environment.

Swent: When did you do this?

Strapko: Oh, boy. I think it was 1972.

Swent: During the school year or in the summer?

Strapko: It was during the school year because Beloit--it was interesting --would have school year 'round, a trimester. And what you would do is you would start out going three semesters in a row: the fall, the winter, and the summer. Then you're supposed to end up with a summer, fall, winter. And that left five semesters in between, two of which you had to be taking courses, but then the other three, it was like your three summers, but you could take them at any time. I think the Environ-Van, I think we did that in the fall. Yes, we started up when kids were starting back in school in the fall, and it ended up just before Christmas.

Also my first job in mining started in the fall and ended right around Christmas time. It worked out well because I came on just as the other students were going back to school. They still had this project that wasn't finished.

Plotting Stream Sediment Survey Data, Spokane, Washington

Swent: What was that?

Strapko: This was for Vanguard Exploration. It was up in Spokane, Washington. They were doing a stream sediment survey that wasn't finished, and I went to work for them and we finished in November. And my last couple of weeks I was back in the office plotting data.

Swent: How did you get that job?

Strapko: It was through a Beloit grant. I never met _____, but one of my professors, Stenstrom, talked to him, and then I actually got the job on a phone interview. And then I went up there and worked for him.

Swent: So that was your first mining.

Strapko: That was my first mining job. And actually I did that in 1970. It was before my environmentalist job, so I never thought that they had to be two exclusive fields.

Swent: No, I think we're learning that now. So you graduated from Beloit, then. When?

Strapko: We had an undergraduate thesis that had to be done. I had finished my course work in 1974 but then took an extra year to to my undergraduate thesis.

Swent: What was the topic of that?

Strapko: That was "The Asteroidal Origin of Chondrites." I was advised by a friend of mine, John Aleinehoff, who was a year ahead of me. He told me to do something that I would never, ever want to hear about again, and he suggested chondrites. And he was right, by the time this total literature research--Beloit was a very field-oriented program, but the thesis was to do the literature part, as practice, to help you with your master's thesis. You had enough training in the field aspect. This was to do the literature research, and doing straight literature research. And I was so sick of it at the end that I never wanted to hear about a chondrite again. And I never have!

Swent: [chuckles] Okay! But it got you your degree.

Strapko: Well, I got my degree. I finished it up just in time to go through the '75 graduation and leave Beloit. I wanted to go out and work for a couple of years in industry because I had no idea of what I wanted to do, what I wanted to concentrate in in terms of a master's degree.

And I had the job with the mining company, and that was a pretty good job. I got to work out in the woods, and it paid for my meals and my motel room. I thought, "I better try that again. That was pretty good," so I packed up everything I had--actually, a subset of everything I had--and went out to Denver, looking for a job. That was in May of 1975. That was an interesting story in itself.

Swent: Tell it.

Strapko: I must have talked to close to 100 companies. Most of them were, "No, we don't have a job. No, we don't have a job." But it's interesting how many people come in and wrack their brains trying to think of somebody else who might have an opening. It's where I got an idea that geologists were very nice people. They really gave me a lot of help, and they would send me to somebody else, and that person would say, "No, I don't have a job." And then that person would try to think of somebody. And finally, "Wait a minute. I think those people over at Homestake are looking for somebody."

And so I went down to Homestake's office. I went in and talked to--I think it was Ted Powers.

Geologic Field Assistant, Homestake Mining Company, 1975

Swent: Was it in Denver at that time?

Strapko: It was in Denver in these little igloos, these buildings down on the south side. It was a funny office. I think I talked to Ted Powers.

Swent: There was Harold Powers.

Strapko: Harold Powers. Anyway, he said, "No, we don't have anything." And as I was walking out the door, he said, "Wait a minute, maybe the guys back in base metals have something," because he was in uranium. So then I went back, and there was Ted Rizzi, Joe Rankin, and Ed Kerr, and that was the base and precious metals group.

And what happened was they did have an opening. They had interviewed a whole bunch of people and picked somebody, and by the time they got hold of him, he had taken another job. So they had to go back to this file of resumes and interviews that they had had and pick somebody new. Or there was this guy who showed up [chuckles] on their doorstep the day they were starting to look for somebody.

And Joe Rankin, who was supposed to make the decision, was out of the office. He was taking a short course. But Ed Kerr was there, and I talked to him. He said he was going to talk to Joe that night, and maybe he'd be in the next day, so I said, "Well, I'll come back." And I went in the next day and, of

course, Joe wasn't there, but maybe he'd be in the next day. I kept coming in every day. Finally, Joe had Ed Kerr give me the interview and essentially give me the job. So I actually got the job before I met Joe Rankin.

Ed Kerr gave me the interview, and it included a mineral quiz. At that point in my life, that's what I thought, but I was told by people who knew about interviewing that, no, they don't do things like that. And sure enough, I got a mineral quiz. And I had a sport coat on. I did have my hand lens with me. And I guess Joe Rankin told Ed Kerr, "If he doesn't have a hand lens and a knife on him, [chuckles] don't give him the job." But I did, and I passed the mineral quiz.

You should ask Ed Kerr about this, but I'm sure this is the way it went. I got all the sulfides right. There's one thing that I did not get right, and that was the gold. And to work for Homestake at that time, I didn't really know the significance. I didn't know that much about companies, but missing the gold would not be a good thing for Homestake. But my response to that was, "Well, we didn't have that in our mineral drawers at Beloit."

Swent: Of course not!

Strapko: So that's why I didn't know what it was. And I didn't really. I couldn't figure out what it was, and I said, "If I have to guess, I'd say it would be chalcopyrite." And he said, "No, that's gold."

Swent: [laughing] But at least you had your hand lens and your knife with you.

Strapko: Yes, so I could actually take the test.

Swent: But most people don't give a mineral quiz?

Strapko: No. That's extremely rare.

Swent: So you were hired on the spot, more or less.

Strapko: Yes. As a matter of fact, he said I didn't have to come in the next day, because by that time I think I'd come in four days in a row, and he said, "Start next Monday. You don't have to come in tomorrow."

Swent: What was the arrangement?

Strapko: I was a geologic field assistant and was hired for six months. At that time, they couldn't hire anybody permanent. I'm not sure

they would hire somebody right away permanent, but they said if they'd keep me on they'd sort of have to let me go and then hire me back the next day. But anyway, to start it would be six months.

Swent: Was there any sort of physical exam?

Strapko: No.

Swent: Or check up on you at all?

Strapko: No. After six months what happened was they said--I think I did a really good job for them, and I worked hard, and they said, "Well, you need to get mine experience before you continue in exploration," so they called up Olin Hart in South Dakota. And he actually was looking for a mine geologist at that time, so I went up there to interview, plus with the strong recommendations of the Denver group, and got a job up there.

Actually, there I did have a physical, and I flunked the hearing test. The lady who was giving it to me said, "You flunked." She was really upset because it means you couldn't go to work. Well, actually--and I was kind of wondering what happened, because I was hired; I wasn't going through the procedure of getting hired, I had a job. Then she looked at my card and she said, "Oh. Well, you're just a geologist. That's okay." [laughter]

But I think the point is that the miners are exposed to a lot more noise, and so if you start out with bad hearing, you're going to have some problems. I never knew about it until that point.

"A Lot of Manual Labor" near Breckenridge, Colorado

Swent: So when you were working for them in Denver, where were you actually working?

Strapko: I was up at Breckenridge, Colorado, for most of the time, for most of the summer. We had a drilling project going up there.

Swent: Looking for "chalcopyrite"?

Strapko: No, actually, it was lead-zinc. I got both galena and sphalerite correct on the mineral quiz, so--

Swent: Okay.

Strapko: But actually, when I started I remember I was, like, digging some trenches to get water channeled off of the road and taking channel samples and running magnetometer surveys and putting in a grid. [There's] a lot of manual labor and things when you're a field assistant.

Swent: Were you working alone?

Strapko: No. And actually, I can't remember--Ed Kerr was there for a while, and then I can't remember the name of the guy I worked with. I think it's John something. But he was a field assistant, too, and we ended up--Ed Kerr would go off to do other things and leave us there, and we worked together there for a lot of the summer. And then he went off with Ed and was working with some other project, and I was there by myself part of the time--that lasted most of the summer--and then I went back to the office in Denver and stayed across the street in a Motel 6. I remember that because in a pay TV, I put the quarter in when I would come back from work to watch the news, and I would also watch the news at ten. It would shut off right in the middle of that, so I'd put in another quarter to watch the last fifteen minutes of the news.

But I stayed there and worked in the office until I got the job offer at Lead, then I went off to Lead and worked at Homestake Mine for a year.

Stope Geologist at the Homestake Mine, Lead, South Dakota

Swent: Working in the mine?

Strapko: Yes, as a stope geologist.

Swent: That was still all underground at that time.

Strapko: Oh, yes, yes. There was no open cut. I started out in 19 Ledge, which was a new area with the best ore. And there was another geologist there, Don Hall, who was the most senior geologist, and he did a lot of mapping and new development type stuff. And then he was also there to keep an eye on the new geologist. The new geologist would start off in 19 Ledge. And then one of the other geologists there left, and I moved over to another division, Division 4, still between the 48-50 and the 1,600 levels, but this was off into a different series of ledges. And then I had

my own division. And the new geologist went to work in 19 Ledge for Don Hall.

And then I had been there about a year, and they needed a geologist out in Michigan. They had a copper project out there; it was a joint venture with International Nickel. And they called up--I don't know why they called him up, but they pulled somebody out of the mine because they were doing underground work. I never thought of this before just this minute, but they were doing underground work at the Michigan project, but the job when I got out there was just logging core on the surface, so they didn't really need somebody with underground experience--but they called up Olin Hart.

One of the reasons might be that the manager there, Ross Grunwald, hadn't worked at Lead. But Olin came to me and said, "Well, they need somebody in exploration." And that had been where I had started, and I jumped at the chance to get back into exploration.

Logging 50,000 Feet of Core, Centennial Mine, Calumet, Michigan

Strapko: So I had been at Lead for about a year when that opportunity came up. And I remember when I moved out to Michigan it was about October because I remember driving up to the project up there. And the Upper Peninsula, it's got Lake Superior on both sides of it, so it doesn't get as cold as it does in Minnesota or Wisconsin, but it snows a lot. I just remember driving up there on an Indian summer day, and it was just so beautiful, such a beautiful, warm fall day. And I got up the next morning--well, actually, [chuckles] before I went, the first thing I noticed was that in front of all the houses they had these catwalks out. They'd go from the level of the porch out to the sidewalk, and then with steps going down to the sidewalk. I wondered what this was all about. The next morning I woke up and there was snow on the ground and I didn't see the ground again until the following April! I found out what those little walks were for--it was because that the snow could pile up that high before they would have to shovel up. They could just brush off the walks until it got up about three feet high. They get a lot of snow in Michigan.

Swent: Well, you'd been through a winter in Lead, and they get a lot of snow there, too.

Strapko: Not as much snow. More treacherous driving. Much hillier.

Swent: Where were you living?

Strapko: Actually, I rented a room at this lady's house that Olin Hart knew. She's this lady. Her father was a miner. She was born in 1899.

Swent: What was her name?

Strapko: I can't remember. Her father quit--well, she had been down to South Africa, and she was down there. He went down there to live because he was a gold miner. And she had been down there during the Boer War! Very interesting! [chuckles] She'd been all over the world and had some interesting stories to tell. But then I moved to Spearfish and found a little flat.

Swent: So you were commuting.

Strapko: I was commuting then. And during the winter time the roads going over the hills were treacherous.

Swent: Michigan was a little easier in that respect?

Strapko: Yes. And the fact that in Michigan they got so much snow there that they were very efficient at plowing. Plowing was a full-time occupation.

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Swent: What town were you living in in Michigan, or was it a town?

Strapko: Yes. Mohawk. Our office was in Calumet, but actually rental places were hard to find there. I ended up moving into the house of the geologist I was replacing. He was one of the Inco guys, and they were replacing them with Homestake people, so he was leaving. I ended up moving into that house, so I was next door to one of the other Inco geologists and across the street from another one. We were also right next door to the bar across the street from the restaurant, so it was a very convenient situation. This is a little town, Mohawk, Michigan. That was about ten miles from where we were working.

Swent: Did you log core the whole time?

Strapko: I logged core the whole time--a lot, about 50,000 feet of core. Eight hours a day of logging core. We had three Longyear drills going, we had two Winkie drills going, and then they had to deep-drill the hole at the Centennial--they were drilling a 5,000-foot hole. I had mainly the two Longyear drills that were out testing the sulfide copper. Most of the copper up there had been native,

but there was some copper sulfides or chalcocite in the volcanic flow tops, and they were looking at mining that. That had been largely overlooked by the old-timers because it had so much native copper.

And we found some things that were interesting. As a matter of fact, one of them, the 543-S [?]-there's a company right now that's trying to put that in production. They just brought up somebody else in. I think they might be having problems, but that was supposed to be going into production sometime soon. That was one thing I had to do, logging a lot of core from that area.

Swent: Had you learned how to do this in college?

Strapko: You get sort of trained on the job. Going back to the job in Denver--I had to log core there.

Swent: What is logging core? What do you mean by it?

Strapko: You have the core from the hole. The drilling is like a pipe that goes down and essentially cores a column of rock and pulls it out, so you get a record, this column of rock, from the surface going down. And the log of it is the description of it, so you can describe it every inch or every foot or by ten-foot sections, or by breaks in rock type. It's not something that you learn at school, so the first time I had to do it was when I was working out of the Denver office.

I asked them, "How do you log core?"

Joe Rankin said, "You put down what's important, and you leave off what's not." And then he just laughed. Because the whole point of it is experience, is finding out what's important and what isn't. But they did help me in terms of--

So I logged core there. And of course when I was working at the mine we had essentially two functions: one was to control the grade control on the ore that was being mined, and the other was diamond drilling to replace the reserves that were being mined so there would be continually more and more to mine, to extend the life of them. I logged a lot of drill core at the mine, but there at the mine production line, the rock was pretty much ore or waste; it was not a real detailed sort of log. Plus there were a lot of things you could put down that were understood, since it had been mined for a hundred years. There were things you didn't have to explain about the structure. It was very complex, but everybody knew about the structural problems, so the way we'd log core at the mine was very simplistic compared to

exploration. In exploration you put down a lot of details, some things that you might not think are important but somebody else might come back and need to know.

Swent: Do you do this in a notebook?

Strapko: There's various ways to do it. Actually, at that time, International Nickel, who had started as the operator, did it in a computer form. We had papers with little boxes, with one letter per box, and you would write it out and set it up, and somebody would type it into the computer, and then you'd get a computer printout of your written log.

But at that time, most U.S. companies were doing what were called graphic logs, where you draw little pictures of what you saw in the core--not everything that you saw, but essentially you would start out with a piece of paper, and one inch would represent ten feet, and if there was a vein you'd draw the vein. You'd also write there in an adjacent portion what you saw. You would also have a big graphic representation.

But now just about everybody does logs on the computer, so that graphic part is gone. And the graphic part was always nice. You could look at it and you could see a lot of things just by taking a look at a graphic log, but now that it's done by computer we've kind of lost that.

Swent: How do you correlate this with the core, itself? Are they numbered, labeled in some way?

Strapko: Oh, the drill is put in little blocks of footages, and half of your time is measuring off what the exact footage of where this vein is. And if it's 40 degrees to the axis of the core, which meant the core is at 60 degrees, you have to sort of calculate the orientation of the vein--things like that. Measuring and measuring angles in the core was a large part of just the description of the rock.

Swent: How did you feel about this as a career?

Strapko: Logging core is the logical extent of exploration, where you come up with ideas and you say that something--an ore deposit--should be here. Well, you drill your hole to find out if it really is, so that part of it is exciting. The part of going in and logging core eight hours a day, that gets to be rather boring.

Swent: Very tedious.

Strapko: But now at the last few projects I've worked at, we haven't drilled much core. I miss it; you know what I mean? We should drill, because you want to test the ideas. And not having it, I wish I had some of that boredom that I used to have. But drilling is more expensive, and people don't seem to drill as much. Drilling is the only way to find ore deposits. A combination of having some drill coring and a log is good. But then, when I worked in Michigan eight hours a day, five days a week, that would be too much.

Swent: A lot of core logging, yes. Why did you leave Michigan?

Strapko: In 1977 the price of copper went down to I think as low as 55 cents. It was terrible, a big drop in the price of copper. They had spent a lot of money at the mine and were deep in the shaft at the Centennial and found out that there wasn't as much ore at depth as they thought, so a combination of things led to that project being shut down. At that time, gold was going up in price, so the geologists that were up in Michigan suddenly all went out to Reno.

The Mercury Hot Springs Project, California Coast Range, 1977

Strapko: The project that was just starting there was the Mercury Hot Springs project, and that was started by this guy, [Donald] Gustafson's, program. He had found a report in the files about the Cherry Hill district, and there was both gold and mercury produced there. They had signed a deal on that property when I got out there. Ray Wilcox and I both came out from Michigan.

Swent: Do you remember when this was?

Strapko: This was right around November of 1977--October, November. Yes, it was getting cold in Michigan, but working over in California this was no problem--the Coastal Range. So Ray Wilcox went to work mapping Cherry Hill, and I went to work doing reconnaissance mapping on all the mercury prospects in that district. I was just finishing it up. I was doing more than just reconnaissance. I was doing sort of semi--not detailed mapping, but a little bit more than initial reconnaissance. I did a pretty good job of looking at the prospects around Cherry Hill.

Swent: Did you know why? Did you know the background of why you were looking at these things?

Strapko: Oh, yes. We were going for mercury prospects, looking for gold, essentially.

A High-Tech Model After the Fact

Swent: Did this seem odd to you?

Strapko: No, no. But after they found the deposit, there was an attempt by Homestake to make it sound as though this was a very high-tech effort, that this was the logical extent of some brilliant thoughts of somebody--of mercury as a pathfinder to gold--and we have this one prospect here that had been looked at where both mercury and gold were produced, so we're going to these mercury deposits and look for these specific things and we'll find gold. And it's this model that's being refined.

Actually, they did come up with a very good model of the McLaughlin deposit, but it was well after it was found. The research guys came in, Dave Giles and Carl Nelson. I actually went to a presentation by them, and they had a very good model for the deposit, but it was after it was drilled out, and they had studied the drill cores that were ore, and it was nothing that you really knew beforehand. I mean, beforehand you just went for mercury deposits and took samples and analyzed them for gold.

And really that's the way exploration goes. You have a rough idea, a rough model, but it's not that sophisticated. That's the type of talk and something you send out for stockbrokers. You project this high-tech image so they believe that you'll continue to find things. If they realized how hit-and-miss it was, you probably could never raise money for a mining venture.

But we went to mercury deposits, took samples, and analyzed them.

Swent: How did you find the deposits? How did you know where the mercury deposits were?

Strapko: From the literature.

Swent: Did you do this research yourself, or were you given it?

Strapko: At that point, I had just gotten out there. Don Gustafson had set up the first part of it, the areas right around Cherry Hill.

I think later on in the program--he hadn't done much compilation of the districts up in Oregon; I think I did that myself. But to begin with, things were set out. I just came out on a plane from Michigan and said, "Here are the maps. Let's go out in the field; look at these areas."

Swent: Where were you actually staying? Where did you sleep and eat?

Strapko: To start out, in Colusa. That's where we ran the Cherry Hill program out of. For the Manhattan and McLaughlin, boy, that was --

Swent: Well, let's go step-by-step. So at first you flew to Reno and you met Don Gustafson for the first time, I take it, there, at the Homestake office.

Strapko: Yes.

Swent: And then?

Strapko: Well, we spent a few days in the office, talking about what we were going to do. They said Ray was going to do the detail mapping on Cherry Hill and I was going to do the reconnaissance work. And we went out in the field, took a look at Cherry Hill, and we went to some of these other areas. I think it was the Abbott Mine and a couple of the other ones.

Swent: There were a lot of mercury mines around.

Strapko: Oh, yes, yes. And we just did, I don't know, a day or two of orientation, and then we started out working--Ray on the details of Cherry Hill and me doing the work around there.

Swent: What specifically do you do? Do you take your hand lens and your pocket knife?

Strapko: I would go out and look at the rocks and map what was there. If there was any alteration of, well, the original type, and whether or not there was any alteration of that rock type, whether or not there was any veining or introduced pyrite or any other sulfides, and take samples.

Swent: How big a sample?

Strapko: Five-pound sample. It depends. At that point, for the reconnaissance, you really didn't need to take any specific size or any large samples. It essentially was to see whether or not there was gold in any specific rock type and specific type of alteration, just see if you could get anomalous gold values. And

then, if you find gold values, then you can go back and do a more detailed job and sample everything: take good channel samples, find out exactly how much gold is in exactly what type of rock, and to continue. Of course, that takes a lot more time. What you want is you want something to give you an idea that you should spend more time. And what gives you that idea is the original samples, so on reconnaissance you do a lot of sampling. And if you start to pick up gold, well, you go back and then do more work. But if you sample everything and don't get any gold values, you never go back.

Cherry Hill: Veining and Alteration in Knoxville Sediments

Swent: Did Don give you an idea of what to be looking for?

Strapko: He talked about general things. He had a model at Cherry Hill of veining and alteration in the Knoxville sediments, and I know we went underground and there were little high-grade veinlets, but there was also silicification and argyllic alteration out into the wall rock, and we talked about the values that they got. That's, I guess, pretty much standard in gold. If you look at silica, either quartz veins or silicification and also pyrite sulfides, those are probably the two most important things. Argyllic alteration and propylitic alteration are things that are often found with the sort of outer boundaries to this, but it's not that common to actually have the gold in that. It's something that's worth noting in terms of getting in closer and finding where the gold is.

We looked at where the gold boundaries were at Cherry Hill.

Swent: They already had found some there.

Strapko: Yes, by the fact that they had dug. They had gone in, they'd taken an old report that said there were gold values there, and of course, Don went out and would duplicate the values, so he went in and would take samples. He would take a few samples, okay, and he'd say, "Well, gold is here." And then he signed up the property, and then he would take someone like Ray in, and he would say, "There are samples here. These are the values I got. Now, you go in, and you do a detailed job, where you sample everything."

That's when, at that point, a detailed map could take up to a couple of months for him to finish. Instead of taking your own samples, like you do on reconnaissance, you had a sampler or

possibly two samplers out there sampling all day. Just a small amount of interest that just keeps leading to more and more detailed work, longer period of time that it takes. And after you do the detailed mapping and all that sampling, you decide whether or not you're going to do drilling. That's where the really big money is. And you drill the holes, and then it's looking at core and more sampling. You take a lot of samples, until you're statistically confident that there's enough gold there to mine.

Swent: At that time, what was the feeling about Cherry Hill?

Strapko: Well, we looked at Cherry Hill, and Cherry Hill, itself, was a place where they had produced. We went underground, and there was a thin vein. I actually took some of it and saw visible gold there. It was a high-grade little veinlet, and then the question was how much gold was out into the wall rock. And there was some. But the point was to do detailed sampling to determine just exactly what was there.

That was a nice little prospect, but that was only one-third of the, quote, "Cherry Hill" project, because there was the West End and the Manzanita, and there, it didn't look like much. They were not as good as Cherry Hill. But to get the tonnage to be of interest to Homestake, you put a circle around all three and took it down to a certain depth. Cherry Hill, itself, was definitely the good part of it. The other two were kind of weak, and there was a big area in between where you didn't see anything. So you're always going to be optimistic in exploration; with pessimism you'll never find anything because no project will ever look good enough.

And so we got an orientation on that. Then I went out looking at all the areas around Cherry Hill.

Doing Reconnaissance: "I Was in Seventh Heaven"

Swent: What was your feeling about Homestake as a company?

Strapko: I started out from Denver with Ted Rizzi, Joe Rankin, and Ed Kerr. I thought they were great, even though they sent me to the mine and I was skeptical about that. But the mine experience was good, and luckily I got back into exploration in a year. The job up in Michigan logging core eight hours a day was kind of boring, but the people there were good people to work with. Ross Grunwald is still a good friend of mine. And the Inco geologists

I'm still in contact with, so there were a lot of good people working on that project. Even though my specific job was kind of boring, it was a good experience. By that time, anyway, I really thought Homestake was a good company.

Swent: Did you have any sense of the changes that were taking place in it?

Strapko: Not really at that point. I mean, at that time I was still flying high, and, boy, then I was doing reconnaissance. I was in seventh heaven. Things that actually led to my leaving were probably two years later.

Swent: Let's go through the two years first before we get into that. So you're living at Colusa.

Strapko: I was staying in the hotel there. Actually, I was living at a hotel in Reno, when I was in Reno, and stayed in a hotel in Colusa, when I was doing that work.

Swent: And you had what, a Homestake truck, that you went out in?

Strapko: Yes.

Swent: Or a car or something?

Strapko: A Blazer.

Swent: A Blazer. And Don Gustafson gave you a list of places to go to?

Strapko: Go look.

Swent: He made the list of places where you went.

Strapko: Oh, yes.

Swent: Did you need permission from the landowners or the ranchers or whoever to go onto these properties?

Strapko: Trespassing. That's an interesting subject. We didn't get permission in most cases, unless there was somebody there or unless it said, "No Trespassing. Contact so-and-so." But, you know, if there was nobody there, you would just go in. I mean, essentially, we would go on and look at the rocks and chip off some and take a sample to send in, so--

Swent: Were you alone?

- Strapko: Yes, yes. There were times when I had a sampler with me, but a lot of the times I was alone.
- Swent: Where did you send the samples?
- Strapko: We would actually drive them back to Reno at that time. There was a lab right there we could drop them off at.
- Swent: So you were just going out, spending all day--
- Strapko: Looking at rocks and taking samples. From where I started in geology, that was the goal, was to be doing that type of work, so actually I had "made it."
- Swent: Did it live up to your expectations?
- Strapko: Oh, yes. Yes, it did. It was fun.
- Swent: So you were mostly in Yolo and Lake counties at that time, I guess.
- Strapko: Yes. Well, I was north. I'm not sure what the Cherry Hill--
- Swent: Colusa County, I guess.
- Strapko: Highway 20 goes from Colusa over to Clearlake. And they were right up in the county, I think, east of the divide between the two. It might have been Lake. I can't remember. That was a long time ago. Those areas were not the best.
- Swent: Were you finding things that looked good, or was it all invisible to you?
- Strapko: There was one of the prospects which was northwest of Cherry Hill that had some gold values and looked like it was a possible. And we even ran into the supposed owners, and they were some strange people. But nothing ever happened. I mean, if Cherry Hill had been successful, they would have tried to develop that one more. But there were gold values there, whereas a lot of them had no gold values. And that was true with the whole mercury hot springs program, was that 90 percent of those deposits just had absolutely no gold values associated with them.

We had to go to each one to find out. That's why I say it wasn't high-tech. There was an idea of what we should do, but there was no way to really sort them out. It was just a matter of going to them and taking samples. And, of course, as you learn about what was successful, it was easier to tell the dogs right away, if you did it for a while. But other than that, it

was a matter of going to every one. But, you know, that is a job. I mean, there are a lot worse jobs.

Swent: If anybody came up to you and questioned what you were doing, what did you tell them?

Strapko: Told a lie, essentially, because there was a lot of sort of secretive attitude in the mineral exploration of how they don't want anybody to know what we're doing. I'm working in Nevada now. People know what you're doing. I mean, you're a geologist. You're out there looking for gold. I mean, trying to tell somebody you're doing anything else is just utterly ridiculous.

But at that time we were working in an area where nobody else was working and we were looking for gold. If somebody picked up on that, "What are they doing over there? Maybe we should go over there," you know, that could have been bad. I mean, we didn't own all the property, so we could have had competition over there. That was one program where it was very important to be secretive about what you were doing. If you talked to a landowner you, of course, had to tell you were a geologist and you were doing mineral exploration, but you wouldn't say, "I'm looking for gold at these mercury--." You would say, "I'm looking at the mercury prospects here," and leave it at that.

Swent: Imply that you were looking for mercury.

Strapko: For mercury.

Swent: Did you ever have anyone question you?

Strapko: Not seriously, not to the point where I couldn't get out of it. But, then, most of the people who were wondering what we were doing were not [narrow] people. There were people at the hotels and restaurants and that, and that was pretty easy. I mean, you didn't have to be really specific. Occasionally, they'd find out you're a geologist. You might tell them you do mineral exploration. You definitely wouldn't volunteer any information. If you're too secretive, I think that would probably raise as much suspicion as anything, so I don't know, somehow we made it through without coming into--

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Strapko: It's like anything else beforehand. I mean, when you're asking me about Cherry Hill, I wondered if I should say something [chuckles] about the sampling.

Swent: Yes, let's do it, about the sampling. Please.

Strapko: Well, actually, at that point I didn't know. It was actually a board of directors tour that I found out. By that time, I gave the tour at McLaughlin because I was the only one who knew; not because Don was being a nice guy. It's that he didn't know enough about the property to give the tour, so by the fact that I had to give that one, I went on the Cherry Hill one. And I had been there for about a two-day interview before that, just orientation. I didn't see the sampling.

When we went back on that board of directors tour, I was talking to somebody, [asking], "Did you see the samples over here?" We went over and looked at them, and it was just, like, oh, well, that's _____. So that was much later that I found out about that.

Swent: That the sampling was all bad?

Strapko: Was all bad.

Swent: On the silicified fracture.

Strapko: Yes. So at that point, that was almost when I was off the McLaughlin. I had done all the work, you know, gave them the tour, and then--no, that might have been--no, that was '78, that was right in the middle. I had done my first evaluation, and I was waiting for _____ to be sent back.

Swent: The Manhattan.

Strapko: Yes. Whenever that tour was. I can't really remember.

Swent: The tour of Manhattan, you mean.

Strapko: Yes. When I gave that one was the first time--but that was after all that work was done at Cherry Hill. That was before Cherry Hill was being drilled, so that had to be 1978. We sort of hadn't got up to that point.

Swent: So the sampling at Cherry Hill had been disastrous.

Strapko: Well, yes. But I don't know when exactly that happened. To this day, I don't know who was in charge of that.

Swent: Cherry Hill?

Strapko: Who was in charge of the samplers, whether it was Ray Wilcox or Don or why somebody didn't figure that out. I mean, Ray Wilcox

was not a stupid guy. I don't know what happened. I don't know, he just--a number of people were asleep at the wheel there. I mean, both Ray and Don should have noticed that. I don't know. But anyway, that was in October '78 sometime.

The Manhattan Mine, February, 1978

Swent: So when did you first go to the Manhattan? Do you remember?

Strapko: Oh, yes. I think it was February of 1978. It must have been February. Don Gustafson took me over there. I had finished up the area around Cherry Hill and so we were moving out, further away. Don had been on the property and had talked with the owner there, Bill Wilder. [He] was on the property the whole time, so that was one of the areas where you couldn't really trespass.

So anyway, Bill Wilder said it was fine, that we could come out and take a look around. Don introduced me to him, and we talked for a while. Bill is a real talkative guy. I know when Don had been there before, he didn't get much work done; he had been talking with Bill Wilder most of the time. Anyway, we sort of cut our visit with him short and went around and looked at the areas that Don had sampled. He had been out in the Knoxville sediments, which was the setting at Cherry Hill where you have these hot spring solutions coming up through the sediments and depositing quartz, pyrite and gold.

At Manhattan Mine, it was actually a little bit different. You had some mercury mineralization in the Knoxville sediments, and that's where Don had gotten his samples, and I think they were running about .01 ounces per ton, but there was a lot of mercury produced in these quartz chalcedony veins. Chalcedony that was deposited--it almost looked like it was deposited on the surface. There was this massive silica cap. And there were volcanic rocks there, but Don hadn't sampled any of those.

Strapko Suggests Sampling the Volcanics Too

Strapko: So after he had taken me around to the pits and said he wanted me to do a follow-up, I said, "Did you sample any of this quartz over here?" And he said, "No." We walked over there. I picked up three samples. One was silicified volcanic; one was silicified sediment; and one was volcanic that had a big quartz

vein running through it, with pyrite in it. The samples before that had been .01, .02 ounces per ton. Well, those two were .07 ounces per ton, the silicified ones. And the one with the vein in it was almost a third of an ounce.

So we got the sample results back from that. We just went out there for a visit, and he said, "This is the next place you're going to come." Then I went back and was finishing up something else, and we got the sample results. "Get back there and start working on that!" Those were high values. What happened was, there the Knoxville sediments, which are more argillites, acted as almost a cap for the solutions, which spread out along in the volcanics that were sheared up below there. That's where the mineralization was.

Anyway, the higher-grade mineralization was in the volcanics area, so we did the next step from an initial visit, which was preliminary evaluation, it was called. It took about two or three weeks. Probably took a little bit longer than it should, because we kept ending up talking to Bill Wilder a lot. I mean, Bill Wilder is a fascinating guy. I mean, he's great, but, geez, you start talking to him and waste a lot of time doing that.

But anyway, that evaluation took three weeks or something, and we took over 100 samples. It ended up with an area that was about a mile long and 800 feet wide and had average value. It wasn't a systematic--it wasn't like ore grade or an ore reserve type sampling--but the average in the samples were a little over a tenth of an ounce per ton, which is very good grade for an open pit.

Swent: And these were just surface--

Strapko: Just surface samples. We just went out, did some basic mapping, and sampled, made sure that everything was sampled, everything that looked different was sampled. And some samples were the same type of thing, but get just a distribution--it's a distributional thing. And the area was fairly well covered; nothing was going to slip through the cracks there. And nothing did, because that area was an 800 by 5200-foot area. That's a big target. You know, a lot of good values on that.

So the preliminary evaluation said, "Well, this looks like a good one, so we're going to have to do more work." Well, that was when they needed to start negotiating with Bill Wilder about signing him up, because the preliminary evaluation was just a lock-on where we had no right to his property. But he said, "Sure, take a look at it."

Bill Wilder's Mercury Operation

Strapko: Bill, of course--most of the discussions we had with him were about his mercury operation, which was kind of incredible. He hadn't made any money mining mercury, so he had signed a deal with Mallory, I think, was the battery company to reclaim mercury out of batteries that sat on a shelf too long. Because he had this mercury retort, which there were only two of them in the country, and he had one that operated. So Mallory, of course, came to him, and he needed to make money somehow, so they had this deal with him where he was going to reclaim mercury out of those batteries.

So he was showing us his operation. It wasn't a big budget type thing, but he was a very intelligent guy, and he would make things work. He had a lot of--well, you couldn't say "junk" to Bill, but all the guys working for me, the field techs [technicians], all said, "What's this junk out here?"

And Bill would get really upset. "That's not junk! That's the boneyard." That's just his area of where he would get parts from, and he would make things to make his system work. That was his raw materials. It wasn't junk! So that was really interesting, watching Bill work with these Mallory guys.

I can't remember exactly when he did the test, his first test, but all he had--his collection system--he had it the same as he did when he was mining the mercury. Now, he's smart enough to know that he couldn't--that he was mining mercury that was twenty pounds per ton of rock, where he's reclaiming batteries that were 85 percent mercury, so on his first trial, he only put a few batteries in the retort, not loading it up like you would with ore.

But his cooling tubes--he just had corks in little buckets hanging below, so he could pull a cork out and it would fill up the bucket with mercury. Well, he had enough batteries in there that this little cork-and-bucket system wasn't enough. There was mercury all over the floor, beads of it. And mercury is terrible. You can't collect it. I mean, you try to collect it, and it tends to just break up into small balls and roll away. I don't know how he ever got all that cleaned up.

Part of the job with working out there, doing the mapping, was to follow Bill's mercury operation. And that, in itself, was incredibly interesting.

Swent: So you were mapping areas where mercury had already--

Strapko: Had been mined. And it's actually quite interesting. I think it was more during the detailed evaluation that we found it out, but a lot of the chalcedony that had--there's a variety of colors. There were some that was white, almost colorless; and there was some that was a dark grey, reddish, greenish; and a more colorful kind was also oriented vertically, whereas some of the other whites were bare, and chalcedony had sort of horizontal banding, like it was almost deposited right on surface. And the other vertical things were cross-cutting solutions that came up later and were deposited a little bit deeper.

Well, the ones that had the coloration, the coloration was from very fine pyrite. The pyrite was even so fine you couldn't see it. And then the gold was in the pyrite. The gold there was really super-fine. The sulfides were even microscopic. But the colorful ones, that's what was carrying the gold. That was concentrated in that area, that 800 by 5200-foot area, and so we got a lot of samples in that area that carried good gold values.

Swent: And is that basically where the pit developed later?

Strapko: Yes. Yes, it was.

Swent: Same dimensions.

Strapko: Yes. So at that point, there's a funny thing, talking with Bill Wilder, because they pulled me off of those, I went back and did a report, and it looked good. Of course, I wanted to go back. I wanted to work on the project forever. You're picking up gold values. There are so many places I needed to sample. But then they started talking to Bill Wilder, and, of course, he was talking to me because I became just real friends with him, and you couldn't have that going on during the negotiations, see. His comment to me was, like, "How can I make it on 4 percent? I've got 100 percent of it now, and I can't make it."

At that time, we hadn't really told him that we were looking for gold. We were playing that kind of low key, that we were looking at the mercury stuff and sampling for background values and things like that. But he had to be suspicious because he's a very smart guy. But nobody had ever said, "Well, actually, we're not looking for mercury. We're looking for a big gold mine, so that's why 4 percent of it would be a lot of money." But anyway, so then I had to stop going there until they signed him up.

It took a while because he was having a time seeing why he should sign that, how he could make any money off of that. And I think he was trying to get some information from Homestake about what's going on here. I think he was a little suspicious. But

it took from May of '78 till I think it was November. Because as soon as they got him signed up, I went right back and started working. I think it was December of '78.

"The Cat is Out of the Bag": Gold Values in the Chalcedony

Swent: I think you did say--at one point you told him that he shouldn't be grinding up all that mercury.

Strapko: Yes. When I came back, at that point, the cat was out of the bag about the gold. He had been crushing up some of this rock, this chalcedony, and selling it as decorative rock, to put in your driveway and stuff. And that was where the best gold values were, so when I came back in December he asked about that, and I said, "Well, Bill, the stuff that looks the nicest, that's the stuff that's got all the gold in it. Don't sell any more of that." Then, of course, there were the normal jokes about driveways being paved with gold. And a lot of that stuff is running over an ounce per ton. That's quite a bit of gold.
[tape break]

Swent: We've taken a little break here, so let's get back to your getting started with gold mining.

Strapko: Yes, let's go back to when I finished up the preliminary examination in April of 1978 because a number of things happened then which were kind of important. One was that the Cherry Hill project was starting up.

Swent: Starting up into production, you mean?

Strapko: No, into drilling--as a project--a project starting up, meaning that it became a full-fledged project where the property is signed up, they're about to start drilling. That's what I think of in terms of the project.

Swent: Not just exploration.

Strapko: I then do a property--it has actually become a project. Anyway, they were going to start drilling there, and they had a board of directors tour. It was a very interesting time because Cherry Hill was ready to be drilled. They had finished the detailed mapping, and everything was supposed to be going along just fine, and it was going to be Homestake's next mine. At that time, I had just gotten my good results from the Manhattan Mine. That was looking interesting, too, so when the board of directors came

up, they decided they would go over to Manhattan and take a look at that on the second day.

I was invited along to watch on the Cherry Hill tour, and then I had to lead the Manhattan tour because there wasn't anybody else who knew anything about it. I had done all the work. I knew where the samples were taken, I knew what I had mapped, so I was scheduled to lead that tour.

The first day we went out and took a look at Cherry Hill. I had done an orientation on that. We started looking at the detail there. Once again, the Cherry Hill prospect looked pretty good. It had some nice-looking veining in it, it had some good alteration and gold values out on the wall rock, but the other two-thirds of it, Manzanita was low-grade, and then there was the West End. Supposedly, that was a decent grade--I don't know, somewhere between a tenth of an ounce and two-tenths of an ounce.

I was talking with somebody and I felt a tug on my arm, and it was Tom Cool. He took me over and showed me where they had taken channel samples. Evidently, the guy sampling found this sort of flat fracture and found it was easy to break rock towards that fracture, so he took the sample, right along that fracture. That was for about, well, over a hundred feet. And took five-foot intervals. Five feet here, five feet there. Well over a hundred feet. And the mineralization was just along the fracture, so essentially the mineralization was only about two inches wide. But he had all these samples for 125 feet, and supposedly they were going to have mineralization 125 feet wide, not two inches wide, because they had--I don't know what happened. Somebody was asleep at the wheel on that one. Why didn't they pick this up? Essentially, there wasn't anything there.

Now you have Cherry Hill, which looks good, but then you had the West End, which had a flat, mineralized fracture two inches wide, and you have the Manzanita which is low-grade. And I thought, boy, after seeing that, it just didn't look too good. Besides, you took the three of them together, and I think they projected, now, 250 feet, it was supposed to be fifteen to twenty million tons, which was a good size, but there was no allowing for internal waste. And you could see waste on the ground there. Two-thirds of it was pretty shaky. After that tour, I didn't think much of Cherry Hill.

The Directors' Tour of the Manhattan: "My Moment of Glory"

Strapko: Actually, I had my moment of glory there. I mean, I was going to take them over and show them a good property the next day. And we did. We went over to Manhattan and looked around. At that time, as I said, they had outlined an area about 800 feet wide and a mile long. Well, I figured taking that out--I did a calculation--taking it out only to 100 or maybe 200 feet, there was about 150 or 160 million tons, as opposed to--it was a lot bigger than Cherry Hill and there was mineralization all along. I hadn't done the detailed mapping, but it was looking good. I mean, even if there was large amounts of internal waste, there was a lot of good-looking rock there that had the potential of becoming a large gold mine.

Well, we got out there and started looking around. They questioned me a little bit. I remember I got really flustered. This was in 1978, so I had been a geologist for almost three years. And Harry Conger, who was the president at that time, started questioning me on this sample that we had taken. It was one ounce per ton. You know, it was, "This five feet wide. Is that a true thickness?" And I was pretty sure it was a true thickness, but I had a sampler do it for me. And he kept asking me. And finally I said, "Well, I'll go get a tape measure," and I started stomping. And he grabbed me by the arm. He said, "Oh, come on. We're just giving you a hard time here." But [chuckles] I was young enough where I got flustered at that point.

Swent: Of course.

Strapko: But anyway, the tour went pretty well. At the end, they asked me what I thought compared to Cherry Hill. And I was tactful [chuckles] on Cherry Hill. At that point I thought, "Thumbs down," but I said, "Well, you know, Cherry Hill is a lot more advanced." That's where I gave my calculation of tonnage. I said, "This seems to be a lot bigger system. It has potential to become pretty big." I think over all it was a pretty good tour.

Obviously, it was something that was coming up, and the work was still to be done on that. We had to do the detailed evaluation, follow the drill proposal, and find a mine there, so I started doing that work about the same time, pretty much, that they started drilling at Cherry Hill. This was a period where it kind of peaked for me personally, where up until that point Homestake had been a really good company to work for and I was really happy in everything.

Cherry Hill was a dog. I mean, just an out-and-out dog. And good friends of mine who were working on the project were treated pretty badly, I thought. All of a sudden, things were not looking quite as good. I mean, they were good friends of mine.

Swent: Treated badly in what sense?

Strapko: Just the way the project was run. They were being almost blamed for things. They had no control over the situation. On a drilling program, hopefully, you do all this work, and you make recommendations as to what should be done next. Well, their recommendations weren't even being listened to. I remember one example where they said things are going badly; they had to come up with a new idea; and they were supposed to fax a new drill proposal to San Francisco. They worked real hard to get this done and sent it to them, and in ten minutes they got a proposal back: "This is what you're going to do," and it was totally different from theirs. It was obvious that it was sitting there, ready to go. The people didn't even look at what they proposed. So these guys--

Swent: This was a change in the drilling program?

Strapko: Oh, yes, because things weren't going well. They weren't finding a gold mine. So they all said, "What do we do next?" Well, we go to Plan B. So those guys worked very hard and were under a lot of pressure to do this, and they just weren't taken seriously. The guys back in San Francisco were sitting there, making their plans and sending them down, "Do this." I don't know. The people at the top are ultimately responsible, but if you have people working for you, and they're close to a project, you should really look at what they're saying. They may not have the experience, but they are closest to what's going on. Just by ignoring what they do when you have--in terms of exploration, it's like the biggest insult. You do this work, and somebody doesn't even look at it.

Swent: I think you said earlier that when you first went with Homestake it was a very small geologic staff.

Strapko: Yes.

Swent: And then it grew.

Strapko: Well, in fact, this was also at the time that it was growing. This was in 1979. There was a big plan to find a gold mine, so--actually [chuckles], they brought in the Boston Consulting Group. They determined the rates of success, backed it out from finding

a gold mine to if you looked at so many properties, you'd get so many projects; and if you had so many projects, so many of them would be successful, go to an advanced stage; and so on and so on. And you would end up with a mine. The plan was, "Well, it's easy. All we have to do is look at"--I don't know what the number was--"3000 properties, and we'll just take it down, and we'll find a mine that way."

Well, there's a little bit more that goes into it, like the quality of the properties and which ones you advance to projects. If you just need a bunch of projects and advance crummy properties to that, that's not going to work. But anyway, the offices had been three or four people, maybe a consultant or two--one in Denver and one in Reno. They also had one in Spokane with a couple of people. But they hired an incredible number of people. There were about thirty-five in Reno and thirty or thirty-five in Denver so they could look at all these properties, so it could filter down and find a mine.

Well, we're working on Manhattan. That was from 1978. This program of finding a mine started in '79. By that time, Manhattan was in the works, so immediately they claimed success when they found a deposit there. "See, this worked." And actually, it didn't work--one of the little known things, because I don't think they found a mine five years after McLaughlin. So McLaughlin was already found back when they had a staff of about five geologists. Then, when they hired, got thirty-five in there, they didn't find another one after that. [laughter]

It's more than just numbers. There's a certain amount of luck; there's a certain amount of good judgment. Whatever part you're doing, to do a good job in that.

Yes, at that time, in '79, there was a lot of people running around. No shortage there of help when I started that detailed mapping at Manhattan. There's Jerry Carr and Bob Hatch. Bob Hatch had worked with me as a sampler before, but he was sort of promoted--

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Swent: You stayed at Clearlake Highlands.

Strapko: Highlands for a while, then we also stayed at Konocti Harbor Inn, which was the other side of Clear Lake, a little bit closer. That was nice, but it was more expensive. At the same time, we had a trailer out there. The trailer would only sleep three maximum and we had five people, so we started alternating of one night out in the trailer, one night in town.

Swent: And you were doing your work in the trailer, your desk work, too?

Strapko: Yes. Actually, that was the place where we were keeping the maps up to date. That was one nice thing about having a trailer, was that we did have--actually, there was another trailer there that Bill Wilder let us use as sort of an office trailer. I had a drafting table set up there.

Swent: What was the relationship with Bill at this point?

Strapko: Oh, by that time, by the time we started the detail work, the cat was out of the bag how we were looking for gold, and he could understand what was going on there. Then, of course, he had a million questions about gold, including what about the crushed rock. But he's a very inquisitive person, so he would be asking all kinds of questions.

Swent: Did you have to get any kind of permits?

Strapko: Oh, no, no. This was when we were still taking rock samples.

Swent: Had you signed anything with Bill?

Strapko: Yes, when we started the detail work. We did not start the detailed mapping and sampling until we had an agreement with Bill. That was December of 1978.

Swent: Did you have anything to do with negotiating that?

Strapko: No, no, I didn't. I mentioned before that, you know, the comment that Bill made to me about how could he make it on 4 percent when he had 100 percent of it and couldn't make it. At that time, we hadn't said we were looking for gold, and I was thinking [whispering], "Because it's gold; it's not mercury." But I couldn't say anything at that point. So by the time we signed an agreement with him, I think at some point there, obviously, the gold idea came out. So then when I came back to start doing the detail work, it was a lot more comfortable. You didn't have to skirt around subjects. You could just be honest with him. We weren't supposed to give him all the data, but we could be a lot more open and honest about what we were doing. Like I said, he had a lot of questions. He's a very interesting guy.

But it worked out well because he helped us out. During this detailed mapping phase, we also did some short drilling, air track drilling.

Detailed Mapping and Air Track Drilling

Swent: Tell us about that.

Strapko: Yes, this was interesting, because you know, if you're just detail mapping and rock chip sampling, you don't need permits. But we wanted to get some idea that the gold values weren't just at the surface. Well, somebody came up with the idea of using an air track drill and just getting the cuttings off of that, sort of like a rotary drill only not really coming out with a rotary drill. An air track drill is just what they use in quarries and open pits to put a hole down really quickly--a three, four-inch diameter hole.

So we lined this up to get this guy with an air track drill to come up. I don't remember if it was three or four days--and we were paying by the day, not by the foot. Most drilling contracts are by the foot, but this guy was just, you know, pay him by the day. And he said that he knew how to take samples. The thing was, he had known how to take samples for some engineer who just wanted a little bit of the rock for what type of rock it was. To sample to find out if it's a gold mine, you need to take the entire amount of rock that comes out of the hole.

So when this whole thing was starting, the question came up, number one, well, we can use an air track drill because that's not really a drill program, so we won't really have to get drilling permits, because it's just, like, "Oh, we're just sampling. It's like soil sampling, you know, you just dig a hole down. This is very similar to that." First of all, we weren't going to go over fifty feet. Yes, that sounds reasonable. So it's not really a drilling.

Swent: Over fifty feet deep, you mean.

Strapko: Deep, yes. But there was a whole process of rationalization of why we didn't need to get a permit.

Swent: Who was doing this? Who was talking?

Strapko: Rationalizing?

Swent: Yes. When was this?

Strapko: That was Don Gustafson and I, and it might have been Ken Jones, too. That group of people were trying to rationalize.

Swent: In your planning sessions.

Strapko: Yes, yes. Can we do this program? Because we needed the information, but we needed it right away, and a permit would take a long time to get, so we were able to rationalize the fact that we did not need a permit for this. But also, "Be kind of low key. Look around. Make sure [chuckles] nobody sees you doing this!" At the time. Because, of course, it was unclear whether you really needed one.

But the other thing was we weren't using water for it. As a matter of fact, if we hit water in the hole, it would stop us. And I think that was another thing that we used as a rationalization is that in most drilling programs you use water, and a big part of the environmental protection is containing your drill water, so since we weren't using water, it wasn't really like a drill program; we weren't doing anything bad. And actually we weren't. We were punching some holes down, and there was no water contamination. Any dust that got up, we were in a real remote area. We were supposed to be collecting the dust anyway, because that was our sample. So in some ways I was part of the rationalization process, and even though I recognize that, I think we were right in a lot of ways. That type of thing is barely worth getting a permit for because I can't see any reason to deny it, because most reasons to deny are on the basis of causing erosion or putting something in the water, and we're not doing either one of those things with that type of program.

Bill Wilder's Boneyard Comes Into Play

Strapko: But anyway, we got that part of it settled, and so we were doing this low-key air track program, looking around, making sure nobody sees us. Well, the guy gets out there, and he had a little pie plate cut in half to take the samples. And the cuttings come spewing out. And you can get a little bit of them in those pie plates, but it's not a good sample, so we had to figure out a way to take a sample. Old Bill Wilder's boneyard came into play. We started out, oh, looking for different size pipes and, "Well, this will probably work." And we took it over and tried it out, and it wasn't working. And it was about a half an hour of trying things, and we asked him again, and finally he just stopped what he was doing and came over, and we started working on getting a sample collector.

An air track has a big bit on it, but it's got a small rod. We ended up with about a 4-inch pipe with a "Y" on it. And for some reason, I thought it would work better if the "Y" was going up. But it ended up working better with the "Y" coming down. In

other words, the cuttings would come up and would shoot out the "Y". It was also a lot more convenient to sample because one of our technicians would be there with a plastic bag, holding it on there. I think we had a rubber band type thing for the sample bag eventually, so it was a little bit easier for the field technician. But at the beginning, he was just holding it on there.

Then, at the top, they had some huge piece of rubber. It was from a conveyor belt, and Bill had cut slits in it so it would fit around the drill steel but it would still keep most of the cuttings from bouncing through. And that was how we connected that onto the 4-inch pipe. But it bent down around, with a clamp on it, because--he made a couple of spares so in case they wore out from the drill steel, then we could take that clamp off and put another one on, and put the clamp back on. But I don't think we had to change them during the whole program.

But anyway, within a few hours we were up and running. We drilled ninety-some holes. And, well, fifty feet turned into [chuckles] seventy in some cases. We sort of pushed a little bit. But essentially we punched a bunch of dry holes into this ground, and we got our samples--and some very good results in them. So we got the information, and the gold values that we were seeing on the surface were down in some cases up to seventy feet. So that was a big part of the detail job.

And we had the detail map. We had a lot of surface samples. I don't know how many. We had the two guys taking them all day long, and we would take them occasionally when we were out--it would take longer to explain to the guy where to take the sample than it would be to sample it yourself in some of the outlying areas.

And then we had samples every five feet from those air track holes, probably ninety-some holes, averaging, let's say, thirty feet, so five, six samples per hole. We had a few thousand samples. And it was still looking very good. I mean, there were obviously holes in the area, so not all of the samples within that 800 by 5200-foot area were ore grade, but a lot of the area had consistently good values.

Rotary Reverse Circulation Drilling Program Suddenly Aborted

Strapko: So then the next stage would be to propose a drilling program to test this. I remember I did the final report on that in May in

1979. I started that detail map in December of '78 and finished in May of '79. If you read the promotional brochure, you'll see how the drilling project started in September of 1979, but there's a little thing that they omitted there. It must have slipped everybody's mind. The famous 1-1/2-hole rotary program that we did there. See, rotary reverse circulation drilling is a lot cheaper than drilling core. It was just that the problem was whether or not you get a good enough sample to do an ore reserve. By this time, in '79, the work at Cherry Hill was proving to be a disaster. They had a few holes with some mineralization in it, but they were spending a lot of money and not finding much gold. Actually, at that point, it was fine with me because I knew that, well, they're going to bring this Manhattan on, and it's going to become a mine, and it was looking good.

We would start by drilling twelve holes, reverse circulation, as a start. Test it again. See if we can pick up the same values at depth that we're seeing at the surface. So the number one hole, which ended up to be the number one core hole, we drilled that hole. Then we went over and started drilling the second hole, and we were about a hundred feet down. A guy drove up to the property with a low-boy. "What's goin' on here?" And he comes out. He found out who was who, and he said, "You guys are supposed to load the drill on my low-boy, and I'm supposed to take it back." And to me, Joe Strapko, "You're supposed to go in and call Don Gustafson immediately." [laughs] You know, this drilling program was shut down right then. So I went back--

Swent: The fellow with the low-boy was another Homestake--

Strapko: No, he was just a truck driver. He was a truck driver. Drove up to the property, said to the drillers, "You're supposed to load your drill on my truck," and me, I was supposed to go in and call Don Gustafson as soon as possible. So a truck driver shut down our drilling program.

I went in and called Don. They did send him out there because they had just found out that they had a huge problem with reverse circulation at Cherry Hill at one of the good holes. They had sixty feet and around a tenth of an ounce. They drilled a core hole right next to it, and they--

Swent: A core is done with a diamond drill.

Strapko: Oh, yes, I should--reverse circulation is where you just get rock chips back that you grind to a pulp. You get the chips back, and assuming you get all of them, you just take a sample of it so you

can do two things: you can describe what type of rock it is in the chips, and you can get a sample.

Well, a core, you can actually physically see the rock, which gives you an advantage. If you're having problems with the core, like you're not getting it, you can see the gap, it's all broken up, you can see what you're sampling, whereas--

Swent: But it's much more expensive.

Strapko: Oh, yes. Yes, because you have to actually retrieve that core of rock, as opposed to just hammering down and busting it up and blowing it out the hole. It was over twice as expensive, so if you can get a good sample with reverse circulation, that's the way to go. But they obviously weren't at Cherry Hill. They had a big problem. Sixty feet at a tenth of an ounce turned into five feet at a tenth of an ounce. So, you know, that was no good. And they decided, well, we can't drill reverse circulation anywhere in Homestake. We just can't use that method any more until they find out what's going on. So the drill program got shut down. I forget when that was. That was in the summer, though.

But anyway, at that time, this is when they had all the new geologists. They were also restructuring how you worked on projects. There were reconnaissance type people who would map and sample, and when the project went to drilling stage, you went into a whole different category, different stage, different people on these drilling programs.

People on the Project Suffer When Things Go Badly

Srapko: Now, they said that you could go--like I got an offer to stay on the project, but a number of things were happening. First of all, I was watching what was happening at Cherry Hill, and there was a lot of scrutiny. That was a project that was going badly, and the people on the project suffer whenever that's happening. And I thought they were suffering unduly. They were good friends of mine, and I wasn't too happy about that.

The second thing was they hired a project manager for Manhattan above me. They didn't offer me that job, and I thought I had it coming. I had done--well, up until that point I had done an excellent job on it and just assumed that would be my job. No, they hired somebody. I didn't have enough experience.

They hired somebody who had ten to fifteen years' experience being project manager.

Swent: Was this someone who was already with Homestake?

Strapko: Actually, I think they had gone outside. Either that, or they had hired him without a specific project in mind. That was Tom Kalk. He was going to end up a project manager. Also, I met him. I stayed on for a while. I actually am still friends with him. Saw him fairly recently. But anyway--I was the one who gave the tour to the board of directors, I gave the presentation, I had to fly out to San Francisco, give a presentation to them with a map and everything. And I thought I was in control. I was the only one who knew anything about the property. It was kind of like "my" project. And so I didn't like the way things were going. I just decided not to put up with that.

Actually, Tom Kalk was good. Things were a little bit different. The project manager at Cherry Hill, Ernie [Arentz], was too easy to get a hold of in San Francisco. I mean, they had a phone--which out in Manhattan there was no phone--so they were constantly being harassed. They were working twelve, fifteen-hour days and jumping whenever Jim Anderson said, "Jump." And it was terrible. But as it turned out at Manhattan, Tom had a car phone, because you had to have a phone. Since there wasn't any phone out to the property, he had to have a cellular phone. The thing was, it worked if it was up on top of a hill, but if you drove it down a little ways, it wouldn't work. So he could just drive it down the hill, and nobody could call you up. It's the perfect phone. Outgoing calls only. [laughter]

The Argument for Drilling Angle Holes on Vertical Ore Controls

Strapko: So there were things--Tom actually handled that really well; not that bad to work for. But, no, I stayed around for the first few holes. Well, there was another thing that was very important to me that didn't get taken care of, and to this day I guess you could argue about it. I think I'm right. I noticed that most of the high-grade gold values were in vertical structures, and anybody, any geologist, any shift boss at Lead knows that if you have a control of the gold, you drill across it. And since these were vertical, it was obvious you drill angle holes. It was obvious to everybody except the people I worked for. The most adamant--I guess, I don't know--was Ken Jones at the time. He said, "Well, if it's big enough, you can drill on the vertical."

So I said, "No, you can't." I said, "You have to drill across the structure. Otherwise, your samples aren't any good."

That's a basic thing they teach you at Lead. And I couldn't believe that these guys were going to drill vertical holes there. Actually--I don't know. I can't trace the exact history, but I think at one point they did have to downgrade the reserves a little bit. And I took a tour years later, and the geologist who was doing exploration there was telling me that they were finding out that there were vertical controls for the mineralization. It was, like, "Yes!" [I knew that] in 1978. [chuckles]

But I think it was right. I saw in the promotional brochure of how things were laying kind of flat. Well, that's where the mineralization spread out. Actually, the controls on it were vertical. And a couple of people told me that that was the case, and it probably would have been better to drill angle holes rather than vertical holes.

Swent: That's in this "General Information Summary" that they put out.

Strapko: Yes, you can see--[thumbing through his copy] See, here. It looks like--

Swent: What page is that?

Strapko: Page 9. You can see from there the things cross at a pretty good angle, like the ore lays like this, [demonstrating] and they cross here. Well, actually, the most important features are the vertical ones coming up and spreads out, so you get a distribution of what you have to do a good ore reserve at an angle. They drilled a lot of holes. I think they drilled 400 holes. But I think they would have been better off with the angle holes.

Things Were Souring, But the Discovery Hole Was My Hole

Strapko: You know, at that time, a lot of things were souring. From '78, first we're on top of the world, to '79, I didn't even want to work on the project. I thought it was a mine. But talking about the project manager first, there was that insult, but I probably wouldn't have worked under him anyway. The angle holes, well, I could have--oh, I didn't know. If I had to do it over again, I would have stayed because I think I can put up with a lot more than I used to be able to if I thought it was that good. But it would be really hard to sit there and say, "Yes, let's drill

vertical holes," when I truly believed that that wouldn't be giving you good information.

Swent: Do you think the reverse circulation drilling would have made a difference?

Strapko: No. Actually, that was all vertical holes. I think you got a good sample, I think, with that method. But you would have had to drill angle holes, still. And they drilled mostly vertical holes with reverse circulation. That's another thing. They're just going down and getting a sample.

But anyway, when the diamond drilling started, the core drilling, Tom Kalk came on and there was a jobber working for him named Jim [McKay]. That was the job I would have had if I would have stayed. I was there for the first few holes. And the first hole, I had my same old twelve-hole program from that reverse circulation program that got cut short, only they had to be vertical holes instead of angle holes. But after the first hole, the program got changed because the first hole had really good values, around two-tenths of an ounce per ton, close to well over 300 feet.

The first thing they did then was drill a hole right near there to duplicate the values. I would have said, and I still have a little different philosophy: "Drill all your holes and then start following up." See, if you drill one hole and then you follow it up, and then you find out that it's bad, then you might not drill your other holes, whereas if you drill the twelve, you can start following up the best hole. But it never works out that way. The patience isn't there. If you hit something good, you immediately follow up on it.

Swent: Your twelve were spaced over the entire area.

Strapko: Over the entire 800 x 5200-foot area. The first hole was at the intersection of the main structure there and one of the major cross-structures with the mercury in it. I went back on it after the deposit was announced, and Carl Nelson did all his work. And they had a really good model for the deposit. I looked it up, and the first hole was in the middle of the ore body. That was, as far as I'm concerned, about as good as you can get. You know, that discovery hole was essentially the first hole, which was my hole.

Swent: So you can feel really good about that.

Strapko: Oh, yes, yes. I think that one thing--I think the work that I did on the project I did about as well as I could have done.

I'll always be really proud of that number one hole in the middle of the ore body.

Swent: That's the Strapko Hole.

Strapko: Right. That was my one hole.

Jardine Project, Montana: "A Really Good Crew" Not Listened To

Swent: Yes. Well, that's good. So was it a hard decision to decide to quit?

Strapko: Well, it was a really hard decision to not stay on that project. Then I stayed out in Reno, and I was kind of unhappy about that. I thought if I moved to Denver things would be better, and I had a lot of friends in Denver, and so I transferred out to Denver.

Swent: Still with Homestake.

Strapko: Still with Homestake. And then, actually, I was shifted over to projects then. I was staying in reconnaissance. I didn't go to projects. I didn't go to the Manhattan project. That was one of the reasons it got called the McLaughlin, that they didn't like the Manhattan project because it was sort of like the atomic bomb, the Manhattan project. They thought that was a bad name, so they had to come up with the different name. Since it was successful, it got called the McLaughlin.

But I went out to Denver and worked in projects for Don Gustafson. Worked on Buffalo Boy, which was a vein project in the San Juans of Colorado, when they were wondering how Homestake got involved with a vein project like that. But then I went up to Jardine, Montana, which was a project I really had a lot of faith in. It was a project that was very similar to the Homestake Mine. Actually, the people that they assembled to work on that project were very good. They all had either pre-Cambrian experience or--essentially pre-Cambrian gold experience, so they assembled a really good crew to work up there.

And they didn't listen to a thing they said. This goes back to the original problem of communications with San Francisco and having people making decisions without really evaluating what you're telling them. So this was a process that I saw happening in '78, '79, and I think it was '81 when I finally left. I got an offer from an ex-Homestake guy, Ross Grunwald. He was working on a small gold--prospecting in Michigan, the Ropes gold mine.

They were starting to do a feasibility study on it, and he needed somebody. And I was really disillusioned with Homestake at that time, and left.

Homestake Standard Property Evaluation Procedures Were Good

Strapko: The funny thing is, though, is that, you know, when you're young --I didn't like a lot of things that happened, coming down from the management. But one thing at Homestake, the procedures that you went through with evaluating the property were really good. When I left, I said, "I'm going to quit and go to work for a good company." And I'll tell you a lot of things that Homestake did, standard procedures for working a property, were a lot better than a lot of other companies. [chuckles] Now I look back and it's the good old days!

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Swent: So, looking back on it, you found that there were some good things.

Strapko: There were personality things there that I couldn't deal with. Somebody much higher than me--[chuckles] I just didn't like the way he operated. But, yes, they would always do detailed mapping of a project before it was drilled. And some situations I got into afterwards, people were drilling properties without even really mapping. I mean, you might map and find out that you wouldn't want to drill it or you would drill it a different way. One thing, when I was working with Homestake that procedure of the phases was always done really well. I don't know, I guess the grass is always greener on the other side.

But it's funny. It's hard. I've thought about that often. I learned a lot by leaving, too, so--

Swent: It sounds as if you were proved right in a lot of this, though.

Strapko: Yes. Like I said, I was proud of the work that I did in the first holes in the middle of the ore body. And the angle hole stuff, I think I was right on. So I guess the one thing is if you're happy with--you know, you think that you did a good job, that's the most important thing.

Swent: In the long run, it probably is.

Working as a Foreman at the Ropes Mine, Michigan

Swent: Do you want to just tell a little bit about what you've been doing since then? You went to Michigan for Ropes and then--

Strapko: Yes. Actually, we did the feasibility study, and that was an interesting project. It was an underground project, and that was why Ross, the guy I worked for in Homestake--I had underground experience [from when] I worked at the Homestake Mine. Well, Homestake Mine is a mine. I mean, you ride a shaft down and everything was just right. Well, this little property, they got the shaft working again, but the old-timers had followed the vein down, and the vein had moved around, so the shaft kind of moved around, and we had to put rollers up on the walls and a cable.

As the cage would go down, with you in it, it would bang back and forth, and the cable would hit these rollers and then they wouldn't be rubbing on the wall; they'd be on a roller, assuming it hit right. It always did. And you'd have to go down incredibly slow because of that. You wouldn't want to do anything that was dangerous. This wasn't dangerous, I guess, but it was really jerry-rigged. I mean, [chuckles] it wasn't the same as working in an operating mine. I think we'd go down, what, 900 hundred feet and take about ten minutes or so? I mean, at Lead you'd go down 4000 feet in less time. It was quite a different operation.

Of course, that made everything else slower. We were doing some drifting underground to set up drill stations, and then we had underground drills. The drifting was being done by miners in the area, which were old miners that had worked in the iron mines, which was soft rock. And we were in hard rock, and they were having trouble getting their rounds to pull. The drillers with the underground drills would complain during the whole project.

Actually, what happened was I became a foreman. The other geologist and I became foremen of the drilling and drifting crew, so the guys would complain to us. The problem we had is we'd promote the best workers to foreman, and we went through two of them: they both became hopeless alcoholics as soon as they became foreman. Guys, who worked just fine, they became a foreman: instant alcoholic. After the second one--

Swent: How do you explain that?

Strapko: I don't know. They were fine when they were working, but they didn't want the pressure of the foreman job or couldn't handle

it. But after the second one, they just decided to make us foremen, so we were running these drilling and drifting crews, geologists. We got really involved in the logistics.

One of the things that happened was this drilling, this underground drilling--guys complained about it the whole time. And I spent a lot of time--we did just about everything we could to get the water out of the air. We had compressed air that we were using to run the drill. I never thought about it, working out West. When you go back East, there's humidity in the air. You compress the air, and there's a lot of water to get rid of. Around the air drill there was all this ice building up, so we used all these systems to bleed the water out--receiver tanks, places to bleed the water out. They complained up until the last day of the project.

And I found out about a month later, after that had stopped, that the same drill--it was a Longyear 38, for the surface drill, which they were used to, was 45 horsepower; for an air-operated underground drill, it was 25 horsepower. That drill, you couldn't compare it to the surface drill, so these guys complaining about it the whole time [were right], it was underpowered, because it was an air drill, underground, and it was supposed to be operating at half the power as of surface drills.

But at the end of it, I knew a lot about compressed air.

Swent: [laughs] I'm sure!

Strapko: That was a really interesting project. I did a little bit more than geology on that. That was interesting.

At that time, though, at the end of the feasibility study, they held off. They didn't put it into production right away. We were essentially a consulting firm. Things got really tight for a while.

Swent: Was this Callahan?

Strapko: No, this was Resource Exploration. We were doing the work for Callahan Mining, and Callahan just sat on it for a while. Well, during this time I decided that I had to do something else, and I started applying to business schools to get an MBA. At the same time, Callahan finally decided to go ahead and put it into production. I got hired as the mine geologist. I had two options: go to business school or be a mine geologist at the Ropes mine. I went to business school. But it's funny. I've come back into mining.

Getting an MBA Degree and Then Back Into Mining

Swent: You did get your MBA, though.

Strapko: Yes, I did get my MBA and went to work with a small printer in North Carolina, who is still a good friend. He wanted to expand his business. Well, we ran into some financial difficulties there. He had a good business, and he wanted to expand it, and he was kind of bull-headed. He hired a bunch of people, me included, that he couldn't really afford, and then all of a sudden--then he also couldn't afford to buy the equipment he wanted, and so I decided, well, it's about time to get out of here.

I got a phone call. It was Ross Grunwald again. "I've got this deal. We're working over in Micronesia." I said, "Where is Micronesia?" And he said, "Oh, it's near Guam." Boy, that's a long ways away. He had a project there that was started up by some ex-Homestake people, Henry Colen and Joe Wargo. And they also had, well, they had Ross working and then another ex-Homestake geologist, Jerry Rahn. He had worked up in Spokane in the office up there. So I went back into the mining industry. I worked over in Micronesia for a year. Very interesting project.

Disillusionment on Yap and Palau: Swamps, Sickness, Not Beaches

Swent: Tell about Yap.

Strapko: Yap. That's an island four miles wide by fifteen miles long, and after a few months it gets really small.

Swent: You know everybody.

Strapko: Yes. And you know, you think of South Pacific islands and sandy beaches--I'd be laying on the beach with a coconut with a straw coming out and everything. Well, in those islands they also have what are called mangrove swamps, which are essentially swamps. So first of all, you don't have sandy beaches all the way around. And Yap. Well, it's a very small island. People's property is a big thing.

First of all, you can't own property if you're not from Yap, if you're not an original Yappese. Well, so all the property is divided up. I mean, every square inch of that island is private. And then you couldn't go out on somebody's private land unless

you asked him, got permission, so you'd have to go out and get somebody's permission to go on the beach. This is on an island that's four miles wide and fifteen miles long and you have trouble going to the beach! Talk about disillusionment!

Between that and being sick about half the time with a bunch of intestinal diseases, it wasn't quite the experience that I thought it was going to be. But it was a very good project.

Swent: What was the project?

Strapko: This was gold exploration, gold in young volcanics, epithermal type, similar to the McLaughlin type. And we just ran out of money without doing too much work. We did some, but mineral exploration is expensive, and it's definitely expensive over there. That's the other thing, you know. You think of a guy in a hammock laying on the beach, living for next to nothing. Well, you can't do that over there. You stay in a motel, which was thirty-some dollars a night; you eat in restaurants, which you pay, probably, less than a city here but equivalent to a smaller town here--probably about the same price that you'd pay in Elko, Nevada--so you can't go there and live cheap. They probably don't want you to be there.

Swent: Were you all the time on Yap? Or were you on other islands?

Strapko: I was on Palau for a while, but that was right after I got sick and so I was sick most of the time I was on Palau. I was staying at a resort there, the Palau Pacific, which had a nice beach around it, so you could easily just walk out on the beach. That was a little bit different than Yap.

But they had some political problems there, and it was with the U.S. government. They had this compact of free association coming up. They would get a lot of money from the U.S. government, but they would also give the U.S. government the right to put military bases there. And with the way things were going in the Philippines then, they were worried that maybe they'd need that.

Well, for the people on the island, some people wanted the money, but I think the political structure was such that the people at the top would siphon off a lot of the money, so then there were problems. There was turmoil there. I never felt endangered; there were a couple of people killed, though. But it was all, I think, the power struggle of what should the people there do.

So between being sick and the politics, I didn't have [chuckles] that much fun there, either! But it wasn't a really bad experience. It just wasn't as much fun as it could have been. But overall, I enjoyed being there for about a year.

After about a year, I enjoyed being back! I worked up in Alaska and Montana for a while, and the last six years I've been working out of Maine, looking for massive sulfide deposits.

Looking for Massive Sulfide Deposits Out of Maine

Swent: In New England?

Strapko: In New England, yes--in Maine on Boise-Cascade land, through Boise-Cascade. Then they didn't want to be active in mineral exploration, so they sold out to Aur Resources, and I worked for Aur. And now Aur is looking for a joint venture partner, so--but looking for massive sulfide in Maine is not one of the "hot" areas of mineral exploration, so I don't know what's going to happen on that area with my projects. So I'm out in Nevada temporarily, but possibly permanently. I like to be where the action is.

Swent: Sulfides of what?

Strapko: Massive sulfides. Pyrite is one, which is usually the major constituent, but what you're looking for is chalcopyrite, copper, sphalerite, and zinc, or galena, lead. And what we were looking for was mainly the copper-zinc massive sulfides. And a lot of times they would have gold with them.

Swent: And Aur Research is a Canadian company?

Strapko: Oh, yes. They're a Canadian company.

Swent: The man I spoke to on the phone had a European kind of accent.

Strapko: Yes. It's funny, he was living up in Quebec and he speaks French, but he's from Europe. He's not from France; he's from Switzerland. But Switzerland, which I always thought was mostly German--well, it isn't mostly German, but about 30 percent French, too. But he's Swiss-French, so his French is from Europe. But then he married a woman over there from Canada, and since he was a geologist and got into mining, he came back to Canada and was living up in Quebec. So he spoke French, but they knew he was different. He wasn't from there. The wrong accent.

Swent: I'm glad to find out what it was. I was curious about it.

So right now you're based in Reno and hope maybe you'll stay there.

Strapko: Still waiting to see what's going to happen on this Aur Resources joint venture, but actually, the future, I think, is out here, so I'm trying to get something going out West.

Swent: Is there anything more that occurs to you about the McLaughlin that you'd like to say? We've covered my questions, but--

Strapko: Oh, just that it was a very interesting deposit just sitting out by itself. That's one thing that's rather odd, that nobody found another one nearby. And also the whole process of it getting put into production in California, which was--

Swent: That was a challenge.

Strapko: --not considered the best state to try to start a mine in. But it was done, and that was interesting.

Swent: Do you think there are any more up there like that? If you go up and hunt around a bit?

Strapko: Well, the one thing, it is fairly close to the surface. I looked all around there. I didn't see anything nearly as good. I just don't know why--of the mercury prospects. I looked at just about every one, as I was on that program for a couple of years, and I didn't see anything. I saw some things that were interesting up in Oregon and in Idaho. The ones that I was involved with didn't turn out to be big mines, but that was the only other place we were picking up gold values and the types of things that you saw at McLaughlin.

Swent: Have you been back up there recently to see the changes?

Strapko: Where?

Swent: Around McLaughlin.

Strapko: I was there when I was working over in Yap, so that was 1987. I stopped by, and we got a mine tour.

Swent: It's probably much the same now.

Strapko: Yes, there was a pretty good hole there in 1987.

Swent: Then, of course, the roads have improved since 1979.

Strapko: Oh, yes, yes. Oh, yes. I almost had a head-on accident going out to there.

Swent: You did?

Strapko: Yes. What happened was there was a high school kid who was running a little bit late going into town, and I had got up late that day and I was kind of in a hurry going out to do my mapping, and we came around a corner, saw each other, and slammed on the brakes. Nobody got hurt or anything. It was kind of like tapped headlights there. But that was a terrible road going out there. We came around that corner--there was not enough room to comfortably get around each other.

Swent: This was from Clearlake.

Strapko: Yes, out to the property. Going five, ten miles an hour you could easily get by each other, but when you're going twenty-five and you see--you didn't want to go flying off the road, so--

Swent: Did you meet any other locals there, other than Bill Wilder?

Strapko: No, actually. Well, that kid. [laughing]

Swent: But you didn't tangle with some of the local people. There were some who were upset about having the road improved.

Strapko: Oh, no, no. I don't know why. Oh, probably more traffic.

Swent: Yes.

Strapko: Bill was about the only one I talked to much out there. He was a good guy.

Swent: You mentioned earlier, when you were investigating some of these other places around, you said that there were some strange people out there.

Strapko: Oh, boy. I can't even remember. It wasn't the Abbott Mine, but there was another one up there. This guy--well, the guy--he was a kid. A kid at that time. He's probably my age. He was a kid. He was trying to tell me that, "Oh, you can't do any work around here because we buried our grandfather in the adit." And the adit was covered over.

Swent: In the adit of the mine?

Strapko: Yes, the mine there. Well, it wasn't a big mine. It was just a small adit. So he was trying to tell us that they buried their

grandfather there--I didn't know whether to believe him, but it's possible! [laughter] Maybe he did! [Imitating] "Oh, yeah. We put him in there sittin' up and everything and closed up the adit." I was thinking, "Oh, God. Let me out of here."

That's one thing with mineral exploration. You get in the back woods, and you meet people who sort of don't get in contact with other people for long periods of time. They're all pretty strange.

Swent: Did you run into any marijuana plantations?

Strapko: No.

Swent: Because that's a hazard sometimes, I understand.

Strapko: No. Actually, when I first got out to Maine, we were driving up to Rangely, the little town of Oquossoc--this Boise subsidiary was called Oquossoc Mining--this little town of Oquossoc, where the guy who had been there for a while was taking me, and said, "Oh, stop in the store here." You know, two or three helicopters in the air, and there were cop cars all over and everything. The only thing we could figure out was they either found a little plantation or--it was really close to the Quebec border. I don't know whether--but somebody there must have had some drugs.

Swent: Something was going on.

Strapko: Something was going on! You don't usually get two or three helicopters in the town of Oquossoc, Maine. I think there's about twenty-five people who live in that town. [chuckles]

Swent: Well, I guess maybe we could wrap it up? Unless there's more you want to--

Strapko: I can't think of anything right now.

Swent: Well, if you think of something later, you can add it. Okay. Well, thank you very much.

The Satisfactory Presentation to the Homestake Board, April 1979
[Interview 2: July 20, 1995] ##

Swent: Continuing on July 20, 1995, we wanted to just fill in a couple of things that we didn't get in detail yesterday, particularly--do you want to start with the presentation to the board?

Strapko: Yes. I'm not exactly sure when that was. I think that was about April of 1979.

Swent: Was this before the trip the directors made up there?

Strapko: It was after. They had already seen it, but we hadn't really done the detailed mapping and sampling. At the time that we went over for this presentation, they had just finished that mapping and wanted to give a more detailed picture and an update of how the project was going.

- Swent: What was the purpose of this?

Strapko: To create excitement, to say that we have a good project here. It was after they had seen it once. There was more work done, but we were about to ask for money for the drilling, so this was a presentation to drum up interest to get money for drilling. The problem was we didn't have the maps completed or drafted, so we had to take over copies with things pencilled in, and the edges kind of ragged. And when we got there--

Swent: And who is "we"?

Strapko: It was Don Gustafson and I, who went over to San Francisco. I had to do the presentation because at that time I was still the only person who knew what work was done there. I was the only one who could give that presentation. It wasn't that I was such an important person within the company. At that point still I had barely over three years' experience. Of course, this was the first time I would ever walk into an office like that and talk to the people who were on the board of directors and the senior vice presidents.

Of course, the Homestake office was a little old, but it was very plush looking. I remember walking in there and starting to pull out these sort of ragged looking maps and things. This was not good! But the presentation--we had good things to say, and the sample results were good, the geology looked good, it looked like it was an excellent project, could be a mineral deposit. So the message was good, and that was the important thing. The people there--it was intimidating for me when I first went in, but as it turned out, everybody was very friendly. They were asking questions about the property, excited about it, and it went very well.

Swent: Do you remember who asked you questions?

Strapko: Not really. I think most people at the table asked questions. Well, in meetings in general I always get pumped up for them, and

after they're over I barely remember what I said and what exactly happened, but I always have a sense of how things went in general. That presentation I know went very well. All the concerns you always have about the quality of your maps, the quality of your presentation. After it's over, you just wonder whether or not the message got across.

Well, anyway, I think in terms of whether or not you got your message across, and in that sense we were over there to convince them that this was a project that was worth drilling. And we were successful in that. Of course, it was successful--such a good project.

Swent: So you really believed what you were saying.

Strapko: Oh, yes.

Swent: You were not fudging at all.

Strapko: And it was easy. It was an easy message to get across. There was so much good data. There were so many ore-grade sample values at the surface. We had groupings of the anomalies where the values were ore-grade. It was obvious that it was worthy of drilling.

Swent: Had you already done the air track drilling?

Strapko: Oh, yes.

Swent: So you had that done.

Strapko: We had the sample results from that. This was to get money to really drill. And after that meeting and after we finished the report--I can't even remember what the final maps, the real drafting maps looked like. But after all that was done was when we started the reverse circulation program that got cut off after 1-1/2 holes, when it was decided that that method was questionable and that we didn't want to use it any more.

Swent: So did you go down the night before for this meeting? Do you remember that?

Strapko: No, I think we went down there in the morning, and I remember going out for lunch with everybody.

Swent: Where did you go? Do you remember that?

Strapko: I have no idea. We walked. Yes, we took the elevator down and went out and walked someplace. Of course, it was a sort of a

nice, very old place, sort of a club-type atmosphere. I don't remember what it was. And I think we left that night. We didn't spend the night there.

Swent: Did you have to wait a while to hear what the results were of your presentation?

Strapko: Yes, yes. There was no immediate reaction from them, although we had a good feeling about how the presentation had gone and how they took it. As I said, we had such good results on that project that it was no problem.

Swent: Looking back on it now, what was the quality of the questions that they gave you? Were they probing questions?

Strapko: I can't really remember. I remember that I thought they were a pretty intelligent group of people in terms of the questions. They weren't questions from lawyers, that type; they were questions from people who knew what they were talking about--questions that had to be answered, or I had to think about them to give good answers to them. I couldn't just sort of BS my way through. These people knew about geology, and I had to make sure that I answered questions well.

And there were a lot of things I didn't know about the geology at that time, which is normal, to be expected, before you do the drilling. There were things I couldn't say for sure. I gave them my best estimate or my feelings about what was going on there. I think maybe that was when I proposed the twelve-hole program, the angle-hole program [chuckles] that got changed to vertical holes.

Swent: But your air track holes had been vertical.

Strapko: Oh, yes. But that was just a deep sampling program. Remember, that was not drilling. We didn't need drilling permits for that! [chuckles] But that did give me a lot of confidence, when you get samples down at fifty, seventy feet with the same results as you're getting at the surface--that there was some continuity, that this wasn't just something where the gold was concentrated at the surface and you'd drill below and get lower values, which was one of the concerns which you have.

Swent: Did the permitting question come up at all at this point?

Strapko: I think maybe it did. When we started talking about drilling, then the question of permitting--because we were operating in California. I'm sure on that point I deferred or said that, well, we were getting permits at Cherry Hill so obviously we

could get permits there, even though it was a different county. But at that time that was not a major concern of mine; I just assumed we could. It might take a lot of work, but I assumed we could and it was a good project.

Swent: Have you done other, similar presentations since then? Or had you done any before then?

Strapko: I hadn't done any before then. I remember that. It was the first time, so that's one of the reasons it was so intimidating. But I've done a lot of presentations since then, and I always feel fairly comfortable in them now, regardless--I always like to have good quality presentation materials, but if you don't, it's still the message. I mean, that was where I learned it, actually, was that you go up and there's all these important people there, and you're young and have ragged looking maps, but they didn't care. It became a mine, and that was the important thing. You have to put that into perspective.

I think now of all the advertising for business, of how presentation materials are so important. In a way, I think they are, but you've still got to look at what's beneath it, the reality there. In terms of mining, the best presentation materials in the world, if it's not a good project, aren't going to help you. A mine is still a mine.

Swent: And these were people who could see beyond the--

Strapko: Yes, definitely. It wasn't a bunch of lawyers. Although I think maybe one of the lawyers was there. I can't remember. I think maybe Denny Goldstein was there and asked some dumb questions. But I liked Denny Goldstein. He just didn't know much about mining, so he would ask a bunch of questions, and we would have a good time.

Distinguishing Manhattan from Cherry Hill

Swent: Well, that was a crucial episode, wasn't it?

Strapko: Yes. Like I say, I think at that time we were asking for the money, and I think at that time Cherry Hill was going and it wasn't going very well, so that since the project was so close, you didn't want to get it lumped in with the bad news from Cherry Hill. And I'm not sure, maybe that's why we gave that presentation even before the maps were done, to sort of distinguish it from Cherry Hill so it didn't get thrown in with

the other bad news. This was a separate project. "This one is still looking very good."

Swent: Could cheer people up.

Strapko: From the tour, I don't know, it seemed to me that Cherry Hill looked pretty suspect, and, of course, Manhattan looked huge and well altered. I didn't have as much data at that time, but it just looked like a better property to me. I don't know if they would be the people to ask, but whether it looked the same to them: knowing that Cherry Hill might not make it but Manhattan looked like a really good one.

Swent: This had involved, I suppose, the same directors.

Strapko: Oh, it was the same group.

Swent: I imagine they all went on the tour, as well. Did you feel that they were competent to evaluate at that point?

Strapko: Yes. They certainly seemed competent enough to evaluate it. It's just they weren't saying things like, "Oh, this is terrible. This looks awful. I thought this was better property." After they had looked at Manhattan, they didn't say, "Well, this certainly looks much better than that Cherry Hill that we saw the day before." I think they have to play a little bit closer, tighter than that, where they can't be making rash, well, not rash judgments or--it's not their job to let that much information out, I think, in front of especially the younger people [who] might be working on the project. They'll go back and make decisions based on what they saw, but they won't say a lot at the time.

But as I said, they didn't say that Manhattan looked much better, but I was always wondering whether they were thinking that.

Swent: I presume this is the message you were trying to get across.

Strapko: Oh, yes, yes. Well, I wasn't thinking about that message until we had the tour the day before. There were some things that really didn't look very good. As I said, that's why I went over to Manhattan, I think. I was thinking that they should really be impressed now because this was such a big system. I was just hoping--you know, at that time, it was my project, and there's some ownership of projects there, and I wanted them to go away thinking that my project was great, that it was good, and that it was going to become a mine.

[A long pause] So it did. That's kind of lucky to be involved in something like that.

Swent: Well, it was pretty historic. It certainly was.

Okay, does that cover the other things you wanted to say?

Strapko: Yes, I can't really think of anything else.

Swent: I really appreciate your coming all the way over from Reno for this.

Strapko: Oh, it was no problem.

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APPENDIX A

McLAUGHLIN MINE

McLAUGHLIN*United States*

The McLaughlin open-pit gold mine is located 70 miles northeast of the Company's headquarters in San Francisco and is the site of the world's first successful use of acid pressure oxidation technology utilizing autoclaves for treating gold ores. The mine was discovered in 1978 by Homestake geologists and the first gold poured in 1985.

For the year, operating earnings were \$17.0 million, an 11% decrease from the \$19.1 million in 1988. Production increases partially offset the significantly lower market price for gold.

Gold production in 1989 was a record 283,843 ounces, an increase of 80,016 ounces from 1988. The parallel oxide ore processing circuit commissioned in early 1989 processed an additional one million tons of ore and provided approximately one-quarter of the mine's total gold production. However, the increased processing of oxide ores lowered the average grade of ore milled to 0.156 ounces per ton from 0.194 in 1988.

By operating on a schedule of three shifts per day, five days a week, McLaughlin mined 14.0 million tons of ore and waste, an 8% increase from 1988. Despite longer hauling distances, cost control measures that improved productivity were instituted. These improvements, coupled with the benefits obtained from the oxide circuit, reduced the cash production cost to \$203 per ounce. This is a 14% drop from 1988's cost of \$235 per ounce.

Exploration drilling continued during the year to expand known mineralization zones immediately peripheral to the pit. At year end, reserves were 2.3 million gold ounces.

ROUND MOUNTAIN*United States*

Round Mountain is the world's largest open-pit, heap leach gold mining operation. Homestake acquired its 25% interest in the mine through the purchase of Felmont Oil Corporation. The mine, located in central Nevada, completed a large expansion project during the first quarter of 1989, increasing the process rate to about 45,000 tons per day. The installation of the automated stacking system for the leach pad was finalized in July, completing the last phase of the project.

Lower gold prices and costs related to the expansion reduced Homestake's share of operating earnings by 35% to \$6.0 million.

Homestake's share of gold production increased 36% to 79,654 ounces in 1989, due in part to the addition of Manhattan ores as well as the completion of the expansion. Cash production costs, including state taxes and royalty payments, were \$255 per ounce, up slightly from the prior year.

In 1989, a zone of near-surface mineralization (the Masada zone) was discovered. This zone contains higher grade unoxidized ores and could be mined by widening the existing pit. Additionally, an underground ramp was driven to explore two high-grade ore zones beneath the planned bottom of the pit, but early assay results taken from the ramp were not encouraging.



Environmental Concern
Certificate of Appreciation awarded to Homestake Mining

Company, McLaughlin Mine by The United States Department of Interior, Bureau of Land Management
"In recognition of your sensitivity and dedication to the protection of the flora and fauna in a mining environment on public lands."

From Homestake Mining
Company 1990 Annual
Report

with record production in 1989. The principal reasons for the decrease in 1990 were lower oxide ore grade and unscheduled mill downtime.

Sulfide and oxide ores are milled at this open-pit operation. Pressure oxidation is required to process the sulfide ores. In December 1988 a parallel oxide circuit was completed which doubled mill capacity. Although oxide ores, which require a simpler processing technique, now account for approximately half of the total tons milled, they are of lower grade than the sulfide ores and currently provide less than one quarter of the mine's gold production. Combined mill head grade in 1990 was 14% lower than in 1989 due to a decrease in oxide ore grade. Combined ore grade is projected to decline further in 1991 as a high-grade sulfide zone is essentially mined out. Accelerated stripping will occur in 1991 in an effort to develop other high-grade sulfide ores.

The sulfide circuit experienced significant downtime during 1990 due to extensive maintenance on the autoclaves. Mill downtime combined with the decrease in oxide ore grade reduced production levels and caused cash costs to increase 12% from 1989 to 1990. Cash costs per ounce were higher in 1988 when

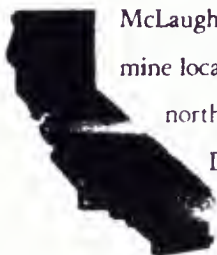
the Company did not have the benefit of the parallel oxide circuit and gold production was much lower.

Exploration drilling began in 1990 on property south of the active pit, but results were not encouraging. Drilling and evaluation north and south of the mine continues in an attempt to extend the mine's perimeter. Other potential gold-bearing areas in the district will be investigated in 1991.

**HOMESTAKE MINE
GOLD RESERVES**
Ounces in Millions at year end



McLaughlin Mine (California)
Operating income from the McLaughlin mine was \$12.2 million in 1990 compared with \$17.0 million in 1989 and \$19.1 million in 1988. The mine produced 6% fewer ounces in 1990 compared

MCLAUGHLIN MINE*United States*

McLaughlin is an open pit mine located nearly 70 miles northeast of San Francisco.

Discovered in 1978 by Homestake, it began producing gold in 1985.

McLaughlin's operating earnings in 1988 were \$19.1 million, an increase of 6 percent from \$18.0 million in 1987. Gold production in 1988 increased 8 percent to a record 203,827 ounces from 188,990 ounces in 1987, reflecting the addition of new equipment and a record gold recovery rate of 95 percent. The average mill head grade was .194 ounces per ton, exceeding budgeted ore grade for the year as a result of stringent ore control and mining higher than predicted ore grade.

The average cash cost per ounce of gold recovered rose 3 percent to \$235 from \$229 in the prior year.

McLaughlin mined 13.0 million tons of ore and waste, a slight decline from

1987's 13.9 million tons, as hauls lengthened due to North Pit development. To offset the increased hauls, McLaughlin modified work schedules and added a \$1.4 million hydraulic shovel.

Installation of a new parallel oxide ore processing circuit was nearing completion by year-end 1988 at a capital cost of \$25.0 million. The circuit will add an estimated 50,000 ounces per year to McLaughlin's previously forecast output for at least five years. The ounces produced from this circuit will assist in maintaining the mine's production above 200,000 ounces per year through the mid-1990s.

Drilling was initiated to explore for additional in-pit sulfide resources extending both downward from the central zone and into the western wall of the South Pit. Modest new reserves were developed during the year. Remaining mine reserves at year-end were 2.5 million ounces.

Articles by Dean Enderlin, Senior Environmental Engineer, Homestake Mining Company, from *The Gold Piece*, McLaughlin Mine newsletter, Debbie Aber, Editor, in 1997 and 1999.

OUR PLACE IN MINING HISTORY

Part II: Quicksilver Discovered!

by Dean Enderlin

Although agriculture dominates our area today, this region has a rich mining heritage going back to the 1860's. In the previous article in this series, we recounted the excitement of the 1859-60 silver rush in the Napa Valley. Although the rush ended after only about a month of frenzied activity, it generated a great deal of interest in exploring this region for mineral deposits. The lust for silver and gold in that era led to many serendipitous discoveries. One of the most important of these was here, near the present-day McLaughlin mine.

In the heat of the Napa Valley silver rush, dozens of companies organized to generate sufficient capital to prospect and stake mining claims. The larger the group of investors, the larger the block of ground that they could control. Most of these companies and the people who organized them have faded from history. One exception was a group of twelve investors, who organized in the city of Napa in early 1860. Their goal was to prospect for mines and minerals in Napa County and the adjacent areas. To accomplish this, they employed two tough old pioneer prospectors, Seth Dunham and L. D. Jones. Dunham was the son of a Cobb Mountain pioneer. He was a hardened man, with a predilection for knife fighting! For the modest wage of \$2.50 per month each, these men ranged through some of the most rugged landscape in this region. Each month, they would return to Napa to report their findings and present samples of their discoveries. Specimens brought to Napa included everything from "iron pyrites to bituminous shale," all of which they hoped might contain silver.

Eventually, Jones and Dunham directed their attentions northward from Napa through unsurveyed and very sparsely populated country. They emerged from the brush on a newly completed road extending from Grantville (Lower Lake) to Suisun City. Prior to the arrival of these prospectors, the road crew had noticed an unusual type of rock in cuts they had made in the vicinity of a place known as Sulphur Cañon. These unusual outcrops were located "just above" a remote stock ranch, known as the "Elk Horn" or "Buckhorn" ranch. It is said that two brothers employed on the road crew, John and Hiram Deering, first noticed the unusually heavy boulders while digging. Suspecting that they had found something important, the Deering brothers loaded some of the rock in a wagon and dispatched it to Napa for assaying.

It is not known whether Jones and Dunham caught wind of the Deering discovery, or if they just happened to see the same outcrop at about the same time. Whatever the case, the prospectors discovered the ledge while walking along the new road. On ascending a hill, they discovered the heavy liver-colored rock where the road crossed a ledge on the uphill side of a turn. Their suspicions that the rock might be cinnabar were confirmed by an expert in Napa. The Napa company immediately staked a mining claim on their new-found prize, calling it the X.L.C.R. (pronounced *Excelsior*). The original locators of the claim were J. S. Stark, M. G. Ritchie, Francis Sage, Jonathan Davis, W. H. H. Holdermann, George N. Cornwell, John B. Phippin, Isaac Day, L. D. Jones, Seth

Dunham, P. Hunsinger, and R. T. Montgomery. The claim was staked on April 17, 1861, just one month before the approval of the creation of Lake County by Governor John Downey!

Cinnabar, the ore of mercury (quicksilver), was a resource that had been mined continuously in California since 1846. The most prolific district in California was in Santa Clara County where the New Almaden mine had been worked as early as 1824. The primary use of mercury in those days was for amalgamation of gold and silver ores. Mercury possesses several rare qualities: It is liquid at room temperature, and it adheres to precious metals while resisting the surrounding rock. Mercury amalgamation was the state-of-the-art gold and silver recover system of the era. As the mills of the Mother Lode and Comstock Lode increased their production, the demand for mercury increased proportionately. With increased demand, came increased price. Seth Dunham and L. D. Jones made their discovery at a perfect time. Although they and their Napa partners lacked the wherewithal to develop their new mining claim, history credits them with the discovery and location of what later would become one of the great mercury mines of California...the Redington mine. The story of this mine and its neighbors in the Knoxville Mining District will be presented in a future issue of the *Gold Piece*.

OUR PLACE IN MINING HISTORY

Part III: Early Knoxville

by Dean Enderlin

In the previous article in this series, the events leading up to the discovery of cinnabar in our district were discussed. The first claim was staked by a group of Napa investors on April 17, 1861. On December 16, 1861, this group formally organized as the Excelsior Mining Company, with a capital stock of \$420,000 divided into 420 shares at \$1,000 each. The company members included two bankers, a newsman, a doctor and an assemblage of prominent citizens, none of whom had sufficient knowledge of mining to organize a full-scale mining operation. Realizing their limitations, the company opted to lease the mine to R. F. Knox and Joseph Osborn.

In 1862, Knox and Osborn began operations and organized a new company called the Lake Manufacturing Company. Their lease arrangement continued for six years. Over that period, the company produced over 16,200 flasks (1.2 million pounds) of mercury. Under the conditions of their lease, the company paid six cents per pound of produced mercury to the owners of the property. As the mine's production rose, so did the population around it. A small community soon formed just south of the operations. With the establishment of a post office on November 30, 1863, the town of Knoxville became official. Named in honor of R. F. Knox, the town boasted a population of over 270 people in its heyday. Knoxville didn't achieve its full potential under the Lake Manufacturing Company, however. It was their successor that brought the mine at Knoxville to prominence.

Horatio P. Livermore (secretary of the Lake Company) and John H. Redington (founder of the San Francisco-based Redington Drug Company) began acquiring the stock of the Excelsior Mining Company in the late 1860's. By 1867, they had gained total control of the Excelsior property. They organized a new company on November 4, 1867, calling it the Redington Quicksilver Mining Company. John Redington's drug company was a direct wholesaler of mercury to the silver mines of the Comstock Lode, and as such, it was the perfect sales agency for the mine's product. A deal was struck for the Redington mine to sell 600 flasks per month to the California and Consolidated Virginia Mining companies in Virginia City. With this big contract, the mine rapidly scaled up production. The old retorts were replaced by larger and more efficient stone furnaces, the roads were improved, and the mine facilities were modernized. Under the direction of new mine superintendent, Charles E. Livermore (Horatio's brother), the mine boomed! By 1872, the mine was operating newly-patented Knox & Osborn furnaces, the state-of-the-art ore roasting furnaces of the era. Each furnace could process 32 tons of ore per day!

During the peak of the Redington mine's production, the town of Knoxville flourished. In 1874, the mine employed 250 men, most of whom lived in town. The mine built and maintained 50 buildings in the community. Among these was a school, a meeting hall, a large stone store, cottages, dormitories, stock barns, and blacksmith shops. Cottages were available for families, and dormitories for single men. The town

also boasted a 30-room hotel and a Catholic church.

Knoxville was originally a community of Lake County, and its large voting population was influential in that county's politics. When the courthouse at Lakeport burned in 1867, a series of heated elections ensued to decide on the location of the county seat. For a time, Lower Lake held the honor, thanks in large part to the miners' vote. An influential politician in Lakeport settled the debates once and for all by arranging to sell Knoxville and the surrounding lands to Napa County. The deal was approved in 1872, and the entire Knoxville township (including most of today's McLaughlin mine land) was sold to Napa County for \$3,500. Needless to say, Napa County made a good deal!

So, where does the McLaughlin mine fit into all this history? Our open pit lies on lands that were once owned and operated by the Lake Manufacturing Company, the same company that operated at Knoxville from 1862 to 1867. Knox and Osborn, the owners of the Lake Company, were edged out of Knoxville by the Redington Company, but they remained active on their claims (now our claims) to the north. It was during their operations here in the 1870's that gold was first found. More on this in a future issue of the *Gold Piece*.

OUR PLACE IN MINING HISTORY

Part IV: The Manhattan Mine

by Dean Enderlin

In past articles in this series, we explored the earliest history of gold and silver mining in this region, the discovery of quicksilver in our district, and the heyday of Knoxville and the Redington mine. As the Redington mine developed, so did other mines and prospects in the vicinity. As was typical in those days, the nearby mining operations banded together to simplify mining claim record keeping and to protect their common interests. They became part of the Knoxville Mining District, one of many local mining districts in this region. Although records are sparse, it is likely that the District held annual meetings, where claimholders nominated the District Recorder and settled disputes between contentious claimants.

Aside from the Excelsior (later called the Redington mine), the earliest prospects of the Knoxville Mining District included the Manhattan (Porphyry), Royal (Soda Springs), Reed and Andalusia. The claims to these mines were all staked in the 1860's. Other mines and prospects in the district included the Lake Mine group, Harrison group (January, New England, Grizzly, Ruby, Central and Red Rock claims), Northern Light, and Red Elephant group (Red Comet, Rex, Red Elephant, Royal Annex and Blue Wing claims). In addition to the quicksilver claims, the District included the copper prospects of the Juniper and White Rock groups, and numerous chromite prospects, all of which were located in the serpentine belts west of what is now the McLaughlin mine.

The Manhattan and Lake mines are of special interest to us, because they embraced the lands that later became the McLaughlin mine. The original Manhattan mine consisted of one claim called the Porphyry. "Porphyry" is a geologic textural term, referring to a mixture of large and small pieces of rock mixed together. It was an appropriate name for the mine, since the shattered volcanic rocks and hot springs terraces hosting many of the cinnabar veins displayed that texture.

The Porphyry Quicksilver claim was staked in 1862 by R. F. Knox and Joseph Osborn. Because it predated the Mining Law of 1872, its dimensions were not the standard 600 feet by 1,500 feet of modern lode claims. Instead, the Porphyry measured 1,000 feet wide by 3,000 feet long, extending from near today's crusher pad southeastward to the south pit backfill. For those who remember the landscape before open pit mining began, the Porphyry claim included San Quentin and Josephine Hills in its boundaries. An early settlement known as Johntown, dating back to 1862, existed at the southern end of the claim. The original discovery of cinnabar on the Porphyry claim was made near this settlement in a rock the miners called "mudrock" (no doubt what we call "mudstone" today)! Johntown consisted of about a dozen buildings, including a dining house, lodging house, stable, store, office and blacksmith/carpenter shop. The population of this community was reported to be 75 individuals in 1874, but by 1889 it had dropped to 40. The local population was dominated by immigrants in the 1870's, over half of whom were from Ireland. Germans and English/Scottish (most of whom were probably Cornish "Cousin Jack" miners) also made up a sizable percentage of the

immigrant population. Contrary to popular belief, there were few, if any, Chinese in the district.

The Porphyry mine began producing quicksilver ore in 1863, under the ownership of the Lake Manufacturing Company. Managed by R. F. Knox and Joseph Osborn, the Lake Manufacturing Company controlled both the Excelsior mine at Knoxville and the Porphyry mine. Ore from the Porphyry was freighted by wagon to Knoxville, where it was processed in the Excelsior furnaces. How much ore was produced at the Porphyry in the early and mid 1860's is not known, since all production was credited to Knoxville.

In 1868, the Lake Manufacturing Company took greater interest in the Porphyry claim, no doubt due to the termination of their lease at Knoxville in 1867. From 1868 to 1877, they not only increased their developments on the Porphyry claim, but they also extended their landholdings by staking fourteen 20-acre lode claims known as the Lake Mine claims (located in 1872). It seems that the Lake Manufacturing Company also underwent an identity crisis in this period: On the Porphyry claim, they called themselves the Manhattan Mining Company, whereas, on the Lake Mine claims, they called themselves the Lake Mining Company. Their reasons for this distinction are unknown.

To process their ore, the Manhattan Mining Company installed a 20 ton per day Knox & Osborn "fine" ore furnace in combination with a 20 ton per day "coarse" ore furnace. These furnaces were probably put into operation between 1872 and 1875. Exhaust fumes from the furnaces joined in a 38-chamber brick and iron condenser system, where the vapors cooled and liquid mercury condensed to be bottled into flasks for shipment. The fuel for the furnaces was wood, and lots of it! The furnaces required up to one and a half cords of oak per 24 hours per furnace. Wood was harvested locally and was also shipped from Lower Lake. The ore was produced from tunnels and open cuts throughout the claims. Most obvious of the mine workings were the open cuts in the hill called San Quentin. Named for California's only prison of the time, the hill reportedly got its name from the hard labor required to break the silicified rock in the open cuts. To blast the rock, workers used about 200 pounds of Giant powder (dynamite) and black powder per month.

The first documented report of gold in the vicinity of the Lake and Manhattan mining operations was made on July 26, 1875. The discovery was made by Frederick Mow, a U.S. Deputy Mineral Surveyor. Mow had been assigned the task of surveying the Lake Mining Company Claims to allow the company to patent (purchase) the claims from the federal government. In the course of evaluating the Lake Mine No. 14 claim, Mow noted that "Gold and Copper float has been found in the gulches but not in quantities to justify prospecting for the same..." Mr. Mow may not have been very enthusiastic about his find, but his observation earned him a place in the mining history of this region! One hundred and three years later, Homestake Mining Company would discover just how much gold Mr. Mow was standing on!

OUR PLACE IN MINING HISTORY

Part V: Early Reports of Gold!

by Dean Enderlin

In the previous articles in this series, we followed the historical events that led to the discovery of the Redington, Manhattan and Lake quicksilver mines. These mines operated for many years, producing quicksilver (mercury) as their product. Quicksilver was unquestionably the most important metal to be mined here in those days. The miners had some inklings that gold was here, but the economics and technology of the day favored quicksilver mining. We value gold because of its beauty, rarity and durability, but its chemical properties make it far more difficult to liberate from the rock. This difficulty translates into greater costs to process. Because of these economic factors, the quicksilver was more valuable to mine than the gold in those days!

As stated in a previous article, gold was first noted near the Manhattan mine by Frederick Mow, a U.S. Deputy Mineral Surveyor. Mr. Mow's observations in 1875 were the first, but not the last made in the 19th Century. Beginning in 1883, a geologist named George F. Becker undertook a bold program to investigate quicksilver resources in the West. In 1888, he published his work as *U.S. Geological Survey Monograph VIII: Geology of the Quicksilver Deposits of the Pacific Slope*. In his description of the Manhattan and Lake mines, Becker casually commented that "accompanying the cinnabar is free gold, which may be found by panning the soil." Becker made similar comments for other mines of the region, including the Baker, Sulphur Bank and Abbott mines.

Traces of gold in the region had been known even before Mow and Becker. Prof. Josiah D. Whitney, of the Geological Survey of California, noted in his report of 1865 that "very peculiar and interesting specimens of cinnabar" were shown to him, collected from a locality between Clear Lake and Colusa. These specimens consisted of "water-worn masses of pure cinnabar, with specks of native gold enclosed in them." It is this Colusa County locality that triggered the first interest of Homestake Mining Company in this region.

The known orebodies at the Homestake mine in South Dakota were thought to be nearly exhausted by 1919. To address the problem, the first Homestake geology department was organized in 1920, and exploration in other states was being seriously considered for the first time. As a consequence, a Homestake engineer, named Arthur B. Yates, was sent to this area in 1926 to investigate a property in the Sulphur Creek Mining District, near where Whitney's sample had reportedly been collected. The property was then known as the Cherry mine, and Yates' visit was prompted by an invitation from the owner.

Yates evaluated the property, and prepared a report in 1927. The Yates report identified considerable quantities of gold at the Cherry mine, but the resource was insufficient to be of interest to Homestake Mining Company at that time. The report was filed and nearly forgotten. Besides, the crisis in South Dakota had eased: A recently-hired young geologist named Donald H. McLaughlin (for whom our mine is named) had

just relieved the troubles at the Homestake mine by correctly identifying new extensions to the orebodies!

Although A. B. Yates' report on the Cherry mine was ignored for almost 50 years, his findings were nothing to scoff at. He concluded that a resource of over 1.5 million ounces of gold might exist at the Cherry mine! This 1920's resource estimate suddenly gained appeal in the 1970's as gold prices began to rise.

In 1971, a geologist named John B. Hite prepared a confidential report on disseminated precious metals deposits for Homestake Mining Company. With the encouragement of Homestake's head of exploration, James A. Anderson, Hite expanded his 1971 studies to better define the relationship between hot (geothermal) water and shallow-forming gold deposits. Hite's continued work on this topic led to the deployment of a secretive exploration program guided by his Mercury Hot Springs Exploration model.

The initial scope of the Mercury Hot Springs program was fairly broad, but focus soon narrowed when follow-up visits were made to the old Cherry mine and the neighboring properties in the Sulphur Creek Mining District. The first of the follow-up investigations was in September, 1977. The most important of these mines were the Cherry, West End and Manzanita mines, all of which had been historically mined for quicksilver and gold as far back as the 1860's. Because of the legacy of the 1927 Cherry mine report, Homestake officials referred to the whole district as "Cherry Hill."

As favorable results from the exploration at Cherry Hill came in, Homestake increased the intensity of exploration in the region with the launching of the Clear Lake Reconnaissance Program in early 1978. The Manhattan mine (now McLaughlin) was one of the first properties investigated in this new effort. Donald L. Gustafson was leader of the first Homestake geologists to make contact with the principal owner of the Manhattan mine, Bill Wilder. The property was being worked by a partnership called the One Shot Mining Company, headed by Wilder.

On February 16 and 17, 1978, Don Gustafson first visited the Manhattan property, identifying himself as a Homestake geologist, interested in looking at "minerals." Unbeknownst to Gustafson, Bill Wilder was already aware that there was gold on the property. Not only did Wilder have a copy of the 1888 Becker report, he also had the results of a gold assay, tested on the advice of State Geologist Melvin Stinson! The assay (made about 1973) was reported at 0.675 oz Au/ton. Gustafson collected 32 samples, the highest gold value obtained from these being 0.34 oz Au/ton.

In 1978, just as the luster of the gold deposit at Cherry Hill was fading, the luster of the new discovery at the Manhattan mine was gaining. Homestake obtained a lease to the One Shot Mining Company lands on October 29, 1978, and began exploratory air-track drilling in mid-1979. The favorable results from these first holes led to diamond drilling in September, 1979. Diamond drill hole number one pierced through what we know today as the Sheeted Vein Zone, the largest of the gold orebodies that we would eventually mine. This drill hole is considered the "discovery hole" for our gold deposit.

As drilling progressed, the large size of the deposit became evident.

On August 27, 1980, after extensive diamond drilling, metallurgical testing, and economic evaluation, Homestake publicly announced its discovery. At a field meeting of the Homestake board of directors, held in September 1980, the project was formally named the McLaughlin gold project. The ore reserve at that time was only about 1 million ounces of gold, but it was enough to begin a world-class mine!

With the pouring of our 3 millionth ounce of gold on February 23, 1999, we showed how far we have come in nineteen years! We have established our place in mining history, and continue to set new milestones in history every day at the McLaughlin mine.

The McLaughlin deposit occurs along a major thrust fault which strikes N40 degrees W and dips variably north-eastward. The upper plate rocks are composed of bedded siltstones, mudstones, and sandstones of the Upper Jurassic (150 million year) and younger Great Valley Sequence. The lower plate rocks consist chiefly of a serpentine melange derived from the Coast Range ophiolite and lesser Franciscan Complex lithologies. The fault zone contains a mixture of both upper and lower plate rocks that have been intensely sheared. The resulting material consists of coherent blocks set in a matrix of flakey fault gouge.

About 2.2 million years ago, the thrust zone was invaded by basaltic magmas resulting in two stages of volcanic activity. The earlier stage involved small but violent eruptions resulting in deposits of volcanic ejecta, small craters, and fragmental intrusives. The second stage resulted in the emplacement of olivine-pyroxene basalt sills, domes, and minor flows.

Hydrothermal activity accompanied lithification of shallow magmas. Fluid flow paths were related to both early

fault zone permeability and later volcanic vents. All rock types in the deposit are hydrothermally altered and locally host gold-bearing veins. Early silica-flooding hardened the poorly indurated materials permitting the development of open fractures as a result of regional strike-slip stress. These open spaces were filled with vein matter, creating a stockwork deposit. Surface geysers and hot springs deposited a chalcedonic sinter terrace.

Mercury (as cinnabar) was localized in the shallow parts of the system and was the object of early mining efforts. Native gold occurs as submicroscopic to rare coarse grains in the chalcedony-quartz veins together with silver (as sulfosalts) and a variety of other minerals including stibnite, pyrite, barite, calcite, dolomite, and adularia.

The McLaughlin deposit is considered one of the best preserved and finest examples of a hot springs type epithermal gold deposit on Earth. Geologic research will continue throughout the mine life.

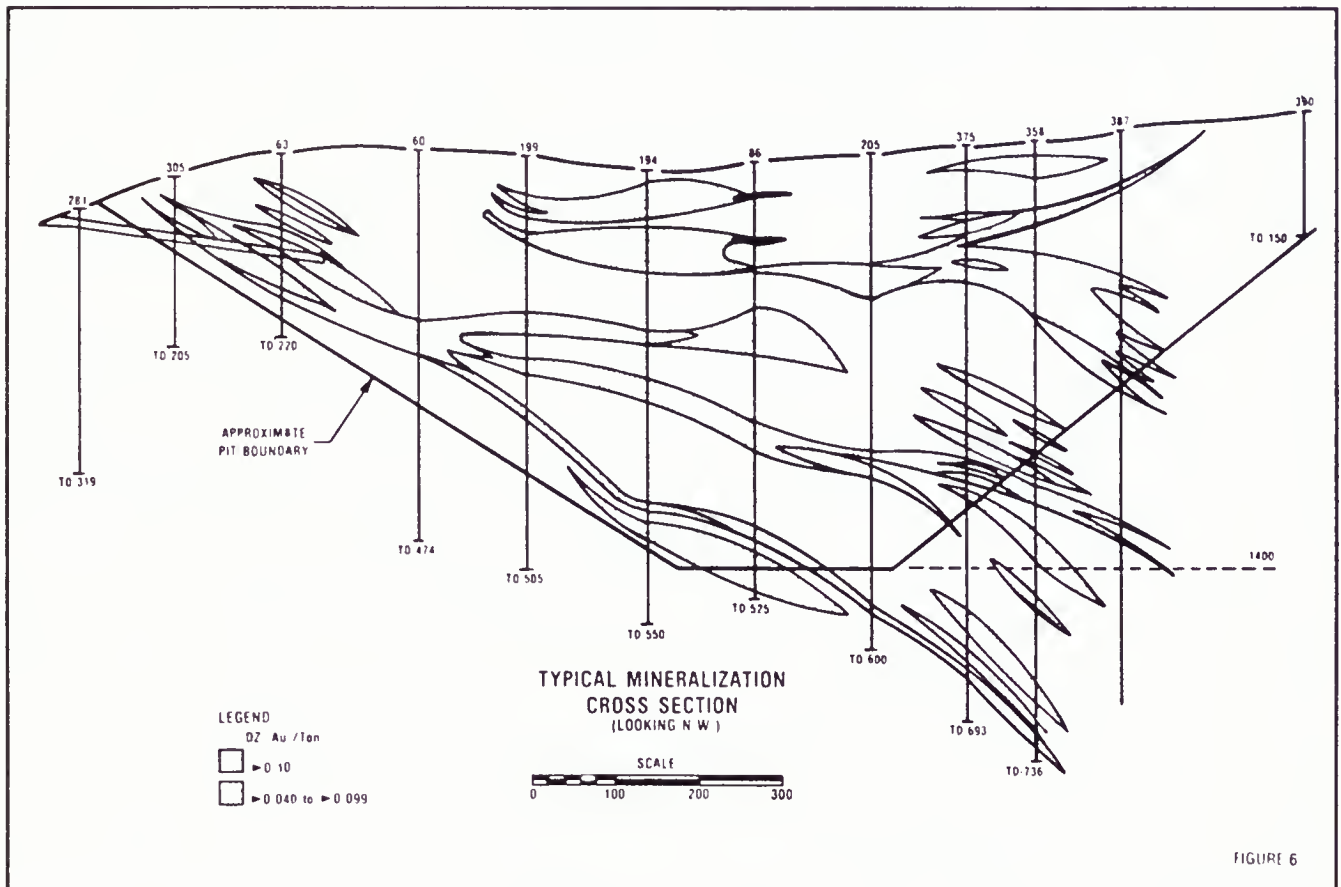


FIGURE 6

McLaughlin Mine Awards and Commendations

- * Lake County Air Basin "Clean Air Achievement" - 1991/1997**
- * CMA Outstanding Safety Performance - 1996**
- * Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Council Recertification - 1996**
- * The Joseph A. Holmes Safety Certificate of Honor - 1995**
- * Earle A. Chiles Environmental Management Award - 1993**
- * Lake County Employer of the Year - 1991 & 1992**
- * CMA "Safe Mine Award" - 1991**
- * BLM "Partner in the Public Spirit" - 1991**
- * Finalist DuPont "Environmental Leadership" - 1991**
- * Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Council Award - 1990**
- * BLM "Protection of Flora & Fauna" - 1989**
- * Soil Conservation Society of America - 1986**
- * Sierra Club Commendation - 1984**

APPENDIX B

RONALD PARKER

PARKER, RONALD D.

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 P. O. Box 11115
 #1100-1055 W. Georgia St.
 Vancouver, BC V6E 3PE
 Canada

Home: 3408 East Covey Lane
 Ozark, MO, 65721

Born: May 25, 1950, Boss, MO

1972 BS, Mechanical Engineering, University of Missouri, Rolla
 1991 Senior Executive Program, MIT

1986-date Homestake Mining Co., Lower Lake, CA, Resident General Manager,
 Production Manager, Maintenance Manager, Chief Plant Engineer
 1976-1986 AMAX Lead Co. of Missouri, Boss, MO, Smelter Superintendent,
 Operations General Foreman, Plant Engineer
 1972-1976 General Motors Corp., Dayton, OH, Plant Engineer

Member: MMSA; SME-AIME; California Mining Association; Toastmasters;
 Rotary International; Pi Tau Sigma

RONALD D. PARKER

Office: 604-895-4406

Fax: 604- 684-9831

17257 - 26A Avenue

South Surrey, B.C. V4A 9R2

SUMMARY

Twenty-three (23) years of increasingly responsible positions in management, production, maintenance, construction and engineering. Direct responsibilities include joint venture management, production management, maintenance management, labor relations, personnel development, budget preparation, cost reduction, cost control, project engineering, and construction supervision.

EXPERIENCE:

Aug '94 **HOMESTAKE MINING CO., HOMESTAKE CANADA INC.**
Present **VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

PRESIDENT AND CEO HOMESTAKE CANADA INC. (Aug 1994-Present)
Comprehensive responsibility for management of Homestake Mining Company's Canadian assets, including joint venture operations in Canada. Duties include management of mineral exploration activities including acquisition and development; management of safety and environmental matters for both active and non-active mines; coordination of corporate-governmental relations, management of relations with investors, investment institutions and financial organizations responsible for making recommendations to the public on the sale and/or purchase of the company's stock; and management of relations with lending institutions to finance major corporate expenditures and/or the sale of corporate stock. Position reports to the President and COO. Specific responsibilities include:

- Vice President Canada and Officer of parent, Homestake Mining Company.
- President and CEO Prime Resources, a public Canadian company 50.6% owned by Homestake Mining Company.

Nov '93 **HOMESTAKE MINING CO., JOINT VENTURE COMMITTEE,**
Present **ROUND MOUNTAIN MINE, ROUND MOUNTAIN, NV**

VICE PRESIDENT HOMESTAKE NEVADA (Nov 1993-Present) Homestake Mining Company of California's representative on the Joint Venture Committee for the Round Mountain Gold Mine in Round Mountain, Nevada. Responsible for Homestake's 25% interest in this 160,000 tpd mine. The Round Mountain Mine produces approximately 400,000 ozs of gold per year, with an operating budget of \$90 million, and 500 non-union employees. Position reports to the President and COO.

Jan '94 **HOMESTAKE MINING CO., HOMESTAKE MINE, LEAD, SD**
Jun '94

Assignment to the Homestake Mine to be an integral member of a productivity/cost improvement team. Responsibilities included a complete evaluation of the underground mining operations, recommendations to management, and implementation of the plan which resulted in significant productivity and cost reduction improvements.

Jul '86 **HOMESTAKE MINING CO., McLAUGHLIN MINE AND MILL,**
Aug '94 **LOWER LAKE, CA**

RESIDENT GENERAL MANAGER (May 1988-Aug 1994) Total responsibility for this 6,000 tpd gold mine and mill. The project includes an 80,000 tpd mining operation, crushing and grinding, 4.8 mile slurry transportation system, flotation circuit, acidic pressure oxidation in autoclaves, carbon-in-pulp adsorption, and conventional refining. Position reports to the President and COO. Direct budget responsibility - \$88,000,000 per year; capital budget - \$15,000,000 to \$28,000,000 per year. Non-union - 350 employees. Significant accomplishments:

- Increased mine productivity and mill productivity by an average of 7% and 6% per year, respectively.
- Directed design and installation of two major projects which improved overall plant economics.
- Restructured organization in 1990, reducing salaried positions by 20% and eliminated several layers of management.
- Reduced cost per ton by an average of 6% with an aggressive cost reduction program.
- Maintained excellent safety, environmental, and community performance and relations. See attached awards listing.

PRODUCTION MANAGER (Mar. 1988-May 1988) Responsible for all operations, maintenance, metallurgical and engineering requirements. Direct operation budget responsibility: \$40,000,000 per year; capital budget: \$10,000,000 to \$28,000,000 per year. Two hundred eighty-nine (289) employees.

MAINTENANCE MANAGER (May 1987-Mar. 1988) Responsible for all maintenance and engineering requirements for the mine and mill. Direct maintenance budget responsibility: \$12,000,000 per year; capital budget \$3,000,000 per year. One hundred twenty-five (125) employees. Significant accomplishments:

CHIEF PLANT ENGINEER (Jul. 1986-May. 1987) Managed and directed all mill engineering and construction personnel. Direct budget and capital responsibilities: \$4,000,000 per year. Twenty-nine (29) employees.

Aug '76
Jul '86

AMAX, INC., LEAD COMPANY OF MISSOURI BOSS, MO.

SMELTER SUPERINTENDENT (Jul. 1985-Jul. 1986) Responsible for the supervision and direction of the operations staff for a 150,000 TPY conventional lead smelter. The facility consists of an updraft sinter machine, blast furnace, refinery, casting lines and 50,000 TPY sulfuric acid plant. Direct budget responsibility: \$18,000,000 per year. Union operation - 161 employees. Specific accomplishments:

- Initiated personnel reductions which decreased manpower by 5%.
- Directed operations activity which resulted in record production at below budget costs.

GENERAL FOREMAN (Nov. 1982-Jul. 1985) Responsible for the management of the Sinter/Acid department. Direct budget responsibility: \$4,000,000 per year. Union operation - 32 employees. Specific accomplishments:

- Initiated personnel reductions which decreased manpower by 32%.
- Maintained excellent safety and lead hygiene programs.

SMELTER OPERATING SUPERVISOR (Sep. 1981-Nov. 1982) Front line supervisor in the 4 smelter operating departments, with total shift responsibility. On special assignment to formulate and implement plans to improve smelter operation and profitability.

PLANT ENGINEER (Apr. 1979-Sep. 1981) Directed and managed all engineering and construction personnel. Direct Management Responsibilities: 4 technical salaried; 13 AMAX hourly, and 90-120 contractor personnel; direct capital responsibilities: \$10,000,000 per year.

PROJECT ENGINEER (Aug. 1976-Apr. 1979) Responsible for project engineering and construction. Managed and directed outside design engineering contracts.

Aug '72 **GENERAL MOTORS CORP., DELCO MORAINÉ DIVISION,**
Aug '76 **DAYTON, OH**

PLANT ENGINEER Duties involved responsibility for plant layout, ventilation, and OSHA compliance.

EDUCATION:

Bachelor of Science Mechanical Engineering
University of Missouri - Rolla: Rolla, MO.
Pi Tau Sigma, Upper 10% of graduating class

Senior Executive Program, Fall 1991
Sloan School of Management
Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.

Various other leadership, management and technical seminars

REFERENCES: Available upon request.

McLaughlin Mine Awards and Commendations

- * Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Council (WHEC) Recertification - 1992**
- * Lake County, Employer of the Year - 1992**
- * CMA "Safe Mine Award" - 1991**
- * BLM "Partner in the Public Spirit" - 1991**
- * Lake County Air Basin "Clean Air Achievement" - 1991**
- * Finalist Dupont "Environmental Leadership" - 1991**
- * Lake County, Employer of the Year - 1991**
- * Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Council Award - 1990**
- * BLM "Protection of Flora & Fauna" - 1989**

APPENDIX C

RICHARD STOEHR

STOEHR, RICHARD J.



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Born: March 5, 1927, Cedar Rapids, IA

1946-1947 Drake University, Iowa
1947-1949 BS, Mining Engineering, Iowa State University

1984-date Private Consulting Practice, San Francisco, CA
1954-1984 Homestake Mining Co., San Francisco, CA, Engineer to Senior vice President
1949-1954 Bald Mountain Mining Co., Trojan, SD, Engineer, Mine Supt., General Manager
1948 U.S. Smelting, Refining & Mining Co., Lake, UT, Underground Miner
1945-1946 U.S. Navy, South Pacific

Past Director: Santa Fe Pacific Gold Corp.; Homestake Mining Co.; Hecla Mining Co.;
Christensen Boyles Co.; Alta Gold Co.; Continental Gold Corp.; Ranchers
Exploration and Development Co.; Port Costa Clay Products Co. (Chairman);
Uranium Holdings Co.; Plateau Hardware Co.; Monte Cristo Uranium Co.;
Cibola General Hospital (Trustee)

Member: MMSA; SME-AIME; Registered Geologist, CA; World Trade Club;

Awards: Professional Achievement in Engineering, Iowa State University, 1984; The
William Lawrence Saunders Gold Medal, AIME, 1989; Distinguished Member
Award, SME, 1990

APPENDIX D

JOSEPH STRAPKO

Excerpts from field notes

(10)

11-20-78
11-20-78
11-20-78
11-20-78

11-20-78
11-20-78
11-20-78
11-20-78

set entering fresh to surface
is a sedimentary to
end) gtz units

11-20-78
11-20-78
11-20-78
11-20-78

4-27-78

silicified greenstone. meta-
volcanic green color here

GW-48
meta

(11)

similar to blue green of Knoxville
and further on elements occ gtz units
sample 2383R

GW-49 same as GW-48 in local set
gtz units

GW-50 silicified greenstone, crystallized
phy mod to end gtz units and
hem in phy. E. side is local set
or are from local hem from 11-20-78
in set

Major frc set NW 1/4 50-51

GW-51 green highly weathered
g. ch. gtz units

GW-52 gtz mica schist gtz units

GW-53 meta-igneous gtz units
metamorphosed gtz units

(24)

A100 graywacke group sand and
olive green both micaceous thin thin
or br lim st in mty are str =
sample

A101 tan, mod to micaceous
detrital serp seta e br lim st
siliceous - kaolinitic sinter v. thin
and local abt annular

A102

tan, mod to micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

tan, mod to micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

A103

tan mod - micaceous detrital supp
seta on br lim st

A104

tan mod well exp. = detrital
serpentine w mod to abt
sinter

A105

tan mod - micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

(25)

A106 siliceous - micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

tan mod to micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

A107

tan mod to micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

1-29-78

A108

detrital serpentine. Micaceous (G12) mod well
exp. and calc-siliceous sinter in v. thin
The rock is grey to tan, sil to mod opalized
local mod in br Fe staining, opalization does
not grade away from mod well opalized
fine texture of sinter v. thin

A109

grey to tan, detrital serpentine w
micaceous and v. thin, for abt 1/2
in. sinter after peeling

A110

tan mod - micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

A111

tan mod - micaceous
serpentine w siliceous and br lim st

APPENDIX E

WESTERN MINING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ORAL HISTORY SERIES

PREFACE

The oral history series on Western Mining in the Twentieth Century documents the lives of leaders in mining, metallurgy, geology, education in the earth and materials sciences, mining law, and the pertinent government bodies. The field includes metal, non-metal, and industrial minerals. In its tenth year the series numbers thirty-five volumes completed and others in process.

Mining has changed greatly in this century: in the technology and technical education; in the organization of corporations; in the perception of the national strategic importance of minerals; in the labor movement; and in consideration of health and environmental effects of mining.

The idea of an oral history series to document these developments in twentieth century mining had been on the drawing board of the Regional Oral History Office for more than twenty years. The project finally got underway on January 25, 1986, when Mrs. Willa Baum, Mr. and Mrs. Philip Bradley, Professor and Mrs. Douglas Fuerstenau, Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Heimbucher, Mrs. Donald McLaughlin, and Mr. and Mrs. Langan Swent met at the Swent home to plan the project, and Professor Fuerstenau agreed to serve as Principal Investigator.

An advisory committee was selected which included representatives from the materials science and mineral engineering faculty and a professor of history of science at the University of California at Berkeley; a professor emeritus of history from the California Institute of Technology; and executives of mining companies. Langan Swent delighted in referring to himself as "technical advisor" to the series. He abetted the project from the beginning, directly with his wise counsel and store of information, and indirectly by his patience as the oral histories took more and more of his wife's time and attention. He completed the review of his own oral history transcript when he was in the hospital just before his death in 1992. As some of the original advisors have died, others have been added to help in selecting interviewees, suggesting research topics, and securing funds.

The project was presented to the San Francisco section of the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers (AIME) on "Old-timers Night," March 10, 1986, when Philip Read Bradley, Jr., was the speaker. This section and the Southern California section of AIME provided initial funding and organizational sponsorship.

The Northern and Southern California sections of the Woman's Auxiliary to the AIME (WAAIME), the California Mining Association, and the Mining and Metallurgical Society of America (MMSA) were early supporters. Later the National Mining Association became a sponsor. The

project was significantly advanced by a generous bequest received in November 1997 upon the death of J. Ward Downey, UC Berkeley alumnus and early member of the mining series advisory committee. His own oral history was completed in 1992. Other individual and corporate donors are listed in the volumes. Sponsors to date include nineteen corporations, four foundations, and 113 individuals. The project is ongoing, and funds continue to be sought.

The first five interviewees were all born in 1904 or earlier. Horace Albright, mining lawyer and president of United States Potash Company, was ninety-six years old when interviewed. Although brief, this interview adds another dimension to a man known primarily as a conservationist.

James Boyd was director of the industry division of the military government of Germany after World War II, director of the U.S. Bureau of Mines, dean of the Colorado School of Mines, vice president of Kennecott Copper Corporation, president of Copper Range, and executive director of the National Commission on Materials Policy. He had reviewed the transcript of his lengthy oral history just before his death in November, 1987. In 1990, he was inducted into the National Mining Hall of Fame, Leadville, Colorado.

Philip Bradley, Jr., mining engineer, was a member of the California Mining Board for thirty-two years, most of them as chairman. He also founded the parent organization of the California Mining Association, as well as the Western Governors Mining Advisory Council. His uncle, Frederick Worthen Bradley, who figures in the oral history, was in the first group inducted into the National Mining Hall of Fame in 1988.

Frank McQuiston, metallurgist for the Raw Materials Division of the Atomic Energy Commission and vice president of Newmont Mining Corporation, died before his oral history was complete; thirteen hours of taped interviews with him were supplemented by three hours with his friend and associate, Robert Shoemaker.

Gordon Oakeshott, geologist, was president of the National Association of Geology Teachers and chief of the California Division of Mines and Geology.

These oral histories establish the framework for the series; subsequent oral histories amplify the basic themes. After over thirty individual biographical oral histories were completed, a community oral history was undertaken, documenting the development of the McLaughlin gold mine in the Napa, Yolo, and Lake Counties of California (the historic Knoxville mercury mining district), and the resulting changes in the surrounding communities. This comprises forty-three interviews.

Future researchers will turn to these oral histories to learn how decisions were made which led to changes in mining engineering education, corporate structures, and technology, as well as public policy regarding minerals. In addition, the interviews stimulate the deposit, by interviewees and others, of a number of documents, photographs, memoirs, and other materials related to twentieth century mining in the West. This collection is being added to The Bancroft Library's extensive holdings. A list of completed and in process interviews for the mining series appears at the end of this volume.

The Regional Oral History Office is under the direction of Willa Baum, division head, and under the administrative direction of The Bancroft Library.

Interviews were conducted by Malca Chall and Eleanor Swent.

Willa K. Baum, Division Head
Regional Oral History Office

Eleanor Swent, Project Director
Western Mining in the Twentieth
Century Series

January 1998
Regional Oral History Office
University of California, Berkeley

Western Mining in the Twentieth Century Oral History Series

Interviews Completed, November 1999

- Horace Albright, *Mining Lawyer and Executive, U.S. Potash Company, U.S. Borax, 1933-1962*, 1989
- Samuel S. Arentz, Jr., *Mining Engineer, Consultant, and Entrepreneur in Nevada and Utah, 1934-1992*, 1993
- James Boyd, *Minerals and Critical Materials Management: Military and Government Administrator and Mining Executive, 1941-1987*, 1988
- Philip Read Bradley, Jr., *A Mining Engineer in Alaska, Canada, the Western United States, Latin America, and Southeast Asia*, 1988
- Catherine C. Campbell, Ian and Catherine Campbell, *Geologists: Teaching, Government Service, Editing*, 1989
- William Clark, *Reporting on California's Gold Mines for the State Division of Mines and Geology, 1951-1979*, 1993
- John Robert Clarkson, *Building the Clarkson Company, Making Reagent Feeders and Valves for the Mineral Industry, 1935 to 1998*, 1999
- Norman Cleaveland, *Dredge Mining for Gold, Malaysian Tin, Diamonds, 1921-1966; Exposing the 1883 Murder of William Raymond Morley*, 1995
- James T. Curry, Sr., *Metallurgist for Empire Star Mine and Newmont Exploration, 1932-1955; Plant Manager for Calaveras Cement Company, 1956-1975*, 1990
- Donald Dickey, *The Oriental Mine, 1938-1991*, 1996
- J. Ward Downey, *Mining and Construction Engineer, Industrial Management Consultant, 1936 to the 1990s*, 1992
- Warren Fenzi, *Junior Engineer to President, Director of Phelps Dodge, 1937 to 1984*, 1996
- Hedley S. "Pete" Fowler, *Mining Engineer in the Americas, India, and Africa, 1933-1983*, 1992

James Mack Gerstley, *Executive, U.S. Borax & Chemical Corporation; Trustee, Pomona College; Civic Leader, San Francisco Asian Art Museum, 1991*

Robert M. Haldeman, *Managing Copper Mines in Chile: Braden, CODELCO, Minerec, Pudahuel; Developing Controlled Bacterial Leaching of Copper from Sulfide Ores; 1941-1993, 1995*

John F. Havard, *Mining Engineer and Executive, 1935-1981, 1992*

Wayne Hazen, *Plutonium Technology Applied to Mineral Processing; Solvent Extraction; Building Hazen Research; 1940-1993, 1995*

- George Heikes, *Mining Geologist on Four Continents, 1924-1974, 1992*

Helen R. Henshaw, *Recollections of Life with Paul Henshaw: Latin America, Homestake Mining Company, 1988*

Homestake Mine Workers, Lead, South Dakota, 1929-1993, interviews with Clarence Kravig, Wayne Harford, and Kenneth Kinghorn, 1995

Lewis L. Huelsdonk, *Manager of Gold and Chrome Mines, Spokesman for Gold Mining, 1935-1974, 1988*

William Humphrey, *Mining Operations and Engineering Executive for Anaconda, Newmont, Homestake, 1950 to 1995, 1996*

James Jensen, *Chemical and Metallurgical Process Engineer: Making Deuterium, Extracting Salines and Base and Heavy Metals, 1938-1990s, 1993*

Arthur I. Johnson, *Mining and Metallurgical Engineer in the Black Hills: Pegmatites and Rare Minerals, 1922 to the 1990s, 1990*

G. Frank Joklik, *Exploration Geologist, Developer of Mt. Newman, President and CEO of Kennecott, 1949-1996; Chairman, Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games Committee, 1997*

Evan Just, *Geologist: Engineering and Mining Journal, Marshall Plan, Cyprus Mines Corporation, and Stanford University, 1922-1980, 1989*

Robert Kendall, *Mining Borax, Shaft-Freezing in Potash Mines, U.S. Borax, Inc., 1954-1988, 1994*

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, 1978-1995, Volume I, 1998

Anderson, James, "Homestake Vice President-Exploration"

Baker, Will, "Citizen Activist, Yolo County"

Birdsey, Norman, "Metallurgical Technician, McLaughlin Process Plant"

Bledsoe, Brice, "Director, Solano Irrigation District"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, 1978-1995, Volume II, 1998

Cerar, Anthony, "Mercury Miner, 1935-1995"

Ceteras, John, "Organic Farmer, Yolo County"

Conger, Harry, "President, Chairman, and CEO, Homestake Mining Company, 1977 to 1994"

Corley, John Jay, "Chairman, Napa County Planning Commission, 1981 to 1985"

Cornelison, William, "Superintendent of Schools, Lake County" (Includes an interview with John A. Drummond, Lake County Schools Attorney)

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, 1978-1995, Volume III, 1998

Crouch, David, "Homestake Corporate Manager-Environmental Affairs"

Enderlin, Elmer, "Miner in Fifty-Eight Mines"

Fuller, Claire, "Fuller's Superette Market, Lower Lake"

Goldstein, Dennis, "Homestake Corporate Lawyer"

Guinivere, Rex, "Homestake Vice President-Engineering"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, 1978-1995, Volume IV, 1998

Gustafson, Donald, "Homestake Exploration Geologist, 1975-1990"

Hanchett, Bonny Jean, "Owner and Editor, Clearlake Observer, 1955-1986"

Hickey, James, "Director of Conservation, Development, and Planning for Napa County, 1970 to 1990"

Jago, Irene, "The Jagos of Jago Bay, Clear Lake"

Jonas, James, "Lake County Fuel Distributor"

Koontz, Dolora, "Environmental Engineer, McLaughlin Mine, 1988-1995"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, 1978-1997, Volume V, 1998

Kritikos, William, "Operator, Oat Hill Mine"

Landman, John, "Rancher, Morgan Valley"

Lyons, Roberta, "Journalist and Environmentalist"

Madsen, Roger, "Homestake Mechanical Engineer"

Magoon, Beverly, "Merchant and Craft Instructor, Lower Lake"

McGinnis, Edward, "Worker at the Reed Mine"

The Knoxville Mining District, The McLaughlin Gold Mine, Northern California, 1978-1997, Volume VI, 1999

Robert McKenzie, "McKenzies in Monticello, Berryessa Valley"

Harold Moskowitz, "Napa County Supervisor"

Marion Onstad, "Neighbor and Employee of the McLaughlin Mine, 1980-1995"

Ronald Parker, "Resident Manager of the McLaughlin Mine, 1988-1994"

Richard Stoehr, "Homestake Engineer and Geologist to Senior Vice-President and Director"

Joseph Strapko, "Exploration Geologist, McLaughlin Mine Discovery, 1978"

Marian Lane, *Mine Doctor's Wife in Mexico During the 1920s*, 1996

- J. David Lowell, *Using Applied Geology to Discover Large Copper and Gold Mines in Arizona, Chile, and Peru*, 1999
- Plato Malozemoff, *A Life in Mining: Siberia to Chairman of Newmont Mining Corporation, 1909-1985*, 1990
- James and Malcolm McPherson, *Brothers in Mining*, 1992
- Frank Woods McQuiston, Jr., *Metallurgist for Newmont Mining Corporation and U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, 1934-1982*, 1989
- Gordon B. Oakeshott, *The California Division of Mines and Geology, 1948-1974*, 1988
- James H. Orr, *An Entrepreneur in Mining in North and South America, 1930s to 1990s*, 1995
- Vincent D. Perry, *A Half Century as Mining and Exploration Geologist with the Anaconda Company*, 1991
- Patrick Purtell, *Maintenance and Management at the McLaughlin Mine, 1985 to 1997*, 1999
- Carl Randolph, *Research Manager to President, U.S. Borax & Chemical Corporation, 1957-1986*, 1992
- John Reed, *Pioneer in Applied Rock Mechanics, Braden Mine, Chile, 1944-1950; St. Joseph Lead Company, 1955-1960; Colorado School of Mines, 1960-1972*, 1993
- Joseph Rosenblatt, *EIMCO, Pioneer in Underground Mining Machinery and Process Equipment, 1926-1963*, 1992
- Eugene David Smith, *Working on the Twenty-Mule Team: Laborer to Vice President, U.S. Borax & Chemical Corporation, 1941-1989*, 1993
- Simon Strauss, *Market Analyst for Non-ferrous Metals and Non-metallic Minerals, Journalist, Mining Corporation Executive, 1927-1994*, 1995
- Langan W. Swent, *Working for Safety and Health in Underground Mines: San Luis and Homestake Mining Companies, 1946-1988*, 1995
- James V. Thompson, *Mining and Metallurgical Engineer: the Philippine Islands; Dorr, Humphreys, Kaiser Engineers Companies; 1940-1990s*, 1992
- William Wilder, *Owner of One Shot Mining Company: Manhattan Mercury Mine, 1965-1981*, 1996

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Frank Aplan, metallurgist
Harry M. Conger, Kaiser, Homestake
Hugh Ingle, Jr., "Independent Small Mines Operator; The Corona Mine"
Raymond Krauss, "Environmental Manager, McLaughlin Mine"
John Livermore, geologist
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Jack Thompson, "General Manager, McLaughlin Mine, 1981-1988"
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